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THE GUIDE TO COMICS • 69

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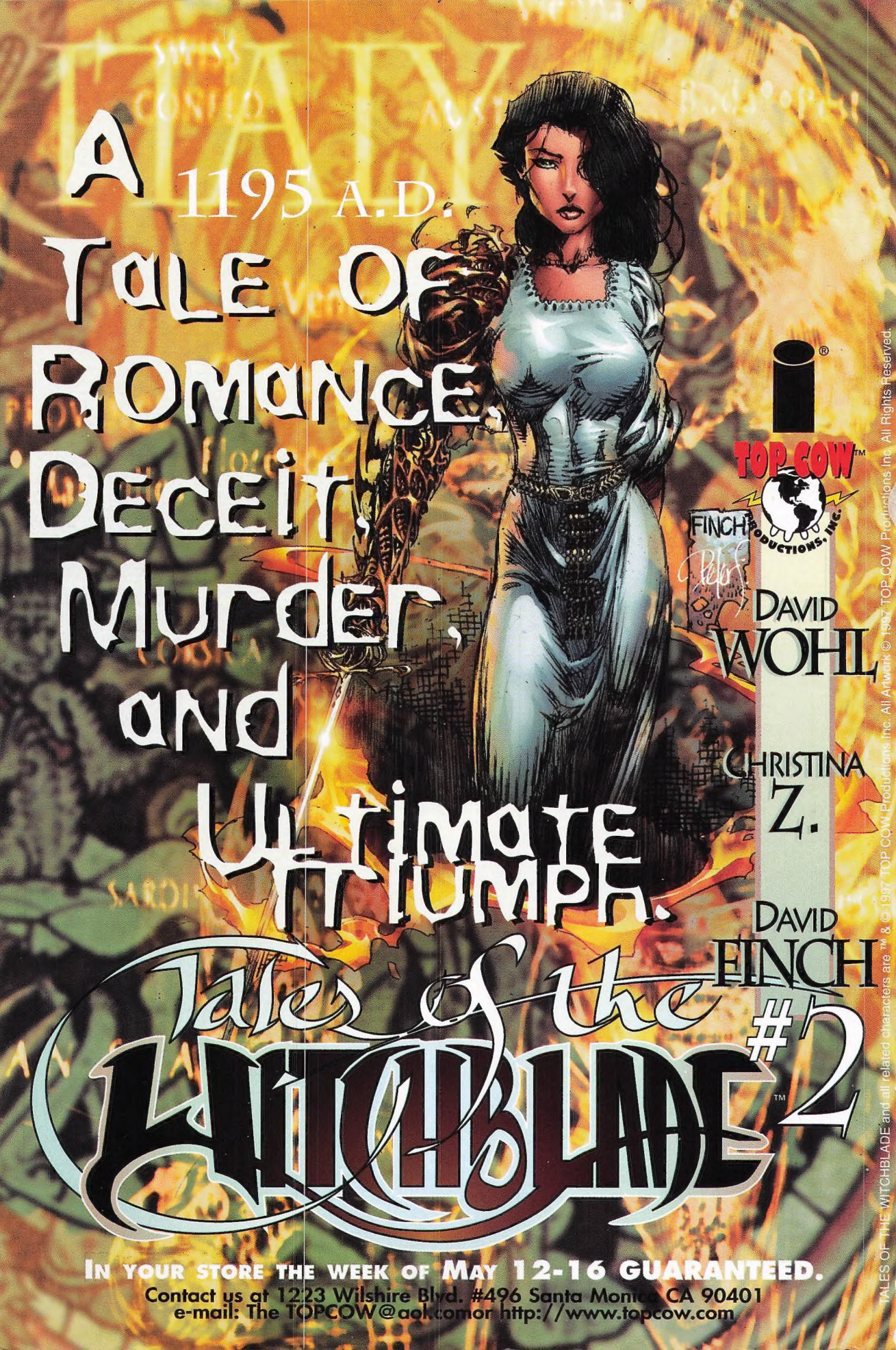
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MARVEL COMICS

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ON THE COVER
Dark Claw was illustrated by Ty Templeton and colored by Twilight Graphics. For the lowdown on all the new Amalgam books, leap to **page 32**.

Ka-Zar/Wolverine was illustrated by Andy Kubert and Jesse Delperdang, and colored by Liquid. Swing to **page 24** to get the goods on Ka-Zar.

standards

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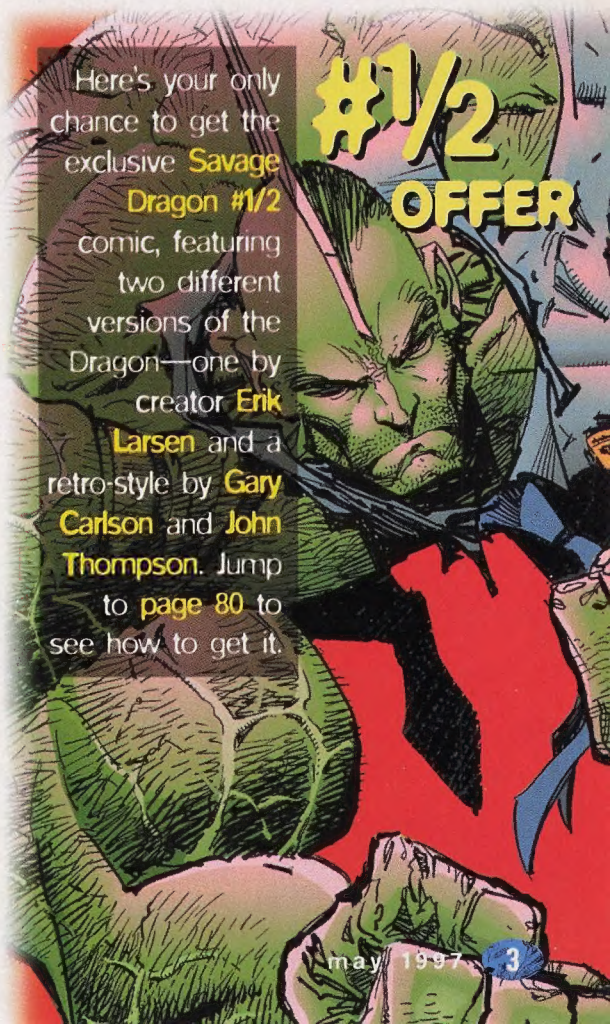
EXCLUSIVE



Here's your only chance to get the exclusive Savage Dragon #1/2 comic, featuring two different versions of the Dragon—one by creator Erik Larsen and a retro-style by Gary Carlson and John Thompson. Jump to page 80 to see how to get it.

"STOP CALLING THEM 'DOLLS,' THEY'RE ACTION FIGURES. ACTION FIGURES! ≥SIGH.≤"

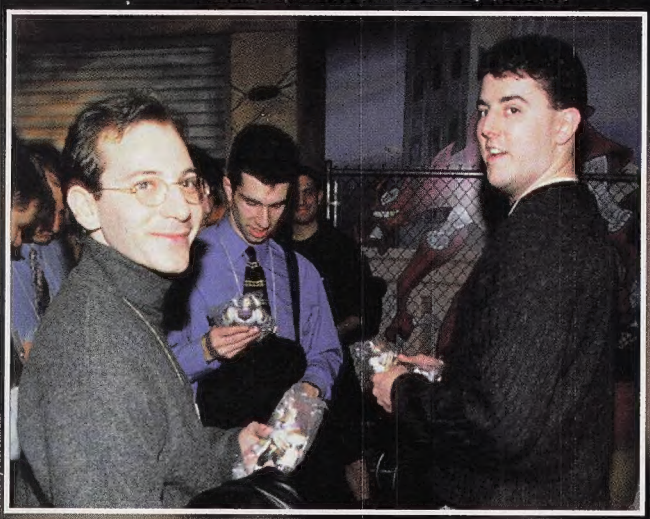


Photo by Paul Schinaldi

TOYING AROUND

This month, we have lots to talk about. The *Wizard* Crew, including Editor-in-Chief Pat McCallum and me, spent a whole week at Toy Fair in New York City. This is the place where every toy company, from Kenner to Mattel to Toy Biz to McFarlane Toys and all the ones in between, shows off the toys they plan to make for the year. That's right, we got to see the new Marvel toys and Spawn toys and Star Wars toys and...you better check out our special Toy Fair Report to see more! We had tons of fun. Many companies rolled out the red carpet for us and gave us their grand tour. And a few couldn't wait to get rid of us...There are lots of pictures from the show, so you'll be seeing the new toys for the very first time!

This was also a very important show for us because we announced that the magazine special we did called *ToyFare* (our second *ToyFare Special* hits in April!) will become a monthly magazine in July. That's right—a great monthly magazine on toys. Like *Wizard*, *ToyFare* will be filled with lots of information, plenty of fun, tons of photos, exclusive offers for limited-edition toys and an awesome price guide...and no coverage of little girl toys.

This issue is a great one for us. We've got an Andy Kubert Ka-Zar/Wolverine cover and a Ty Templeton animated Dark Claw cover, a *Savage Dragon* #1/2 offer and a Superman (in his new costume) Chromium Card. We've got some great stories on Marvel's new *Ka-Zar* series, Alex Ross' newest project, the lowdown on the second wave of Amalgam books and a special news story on the future of "Heroes Reborn," so read on. This issue was a lot of fun to put together. Enjoy!

See ya when we hit 70 (wow)!

Gareb S. Shamus

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Lamest "Star Wars" Moment Greedo shooting first

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Dark Claw Animated Art
Ty Templeton., colored by Twilight Graphics
Ka-Zar Cover Art
Andy Kubert and Jesse Delperdang, colored by Liquid Graphics

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Stuff you don't ever read...

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MAGIC WORDS

Dorks and Tattoos!

Boy, there's a headline that could get me into trouble. But it's also a headline that accurately describes what was in our mail buckets this month. While questions on the Marvel Chapter 11 bankruptcy (which we hopefully cleared up with a *Wizard* #68 news story) led the way in terms of letters received, I also saw a lot of mail still coming in on John Fading (see "Magic Words," *Wizard* #64) and his infamous "dork test." And letters continue to pour in, now mostly in support of Yours Truly, regarding the whole tattoo debate that's been raging here over the last few months. And, as you shall soon see, we got lotsa Gen[13]-related letters. Away we go...

Dear Wizard,

In your big year-end issue, *Wizard* #65, you made a list of the Top 10 things you guys would like to see in the comic world in 1997. You got a couple of good things, but missed a whole lot of others. So here's my list:

10) A good comic book movie.

9) Fewer spinoffs. Just because *Gen[13]* is a good book doesn't mean there have to be five other *Gen[13]* titles.

8) Books like *Milk & Cheese* being easier to get.

7) The death of Aquaman. Boy, is he a moody wuss.

6) The girls in *Gen[13]* (and some other titles) wearing warmer clothes.

5) Women like Vampirella, Catwoman and Lady Death with smaller breasts. They look like they're going to fall on their faces.

4) The return of the regular Wolverine, adamantium and all.

3) Some Witchblade and Darkness merchandise, like toys, posters and statues.

2) More stories like *Marvel vs. DC* and *Kingdom Come*.

1) For some famous writers and artists (maybe Mark Waid or Marc Silvestri) to come to Idaho Falls. Heck, you can have all the potatoes you can eat!

Well, that's my list. Cool, huh?

Hayden Davis
Idaho Falls, ID

Thanks for the feedback. And here are my comments on your list:

10) Rotsa ruck.

9) Agreed. Too many spinoffs can really water down a good concept to the point where nobody even cares about the original anymore. See Punisher or Ghost Rider for ready examples.

8) Boy, this just shouldn't be. All issues of Milk and Cheese are in print and any comic store worth a damn should special-order books like this for customers that want them. In the proud M and C tradition, I heartily encourage you to repeatedly kidney-punch any comic retailer until he can't bend at the waist if he tells you that books like this are "hard to get."

7) I don't read the book. Therefore, I don't care.

6) Agreed.

5) Agreed.

4) No comment.

3) You're in luck. A Darkness poster from our Top Cow buddies hits stores in March, and then Clayburn Moore and his Moore Creations batch of weirdos zonk us with a Witchblade cold-cast porcelain statue in May.

2) Okay. But what kind of stories are those?

1) Silvestri seems interested. I talked to him about hitting Idaho Falls and the prospect of unlimited potatoes. He got this faraway look in his eyes, said, "Mmmmm...potatoes," and then just started to drool. I think it's looking good.

Dear Wizard:

I am looking for information about a '70s underground comic artist by the name of Vaughn Bodé. His list of works includes comics such as *Deadbone*, *Cheech Wizard* and *Cobalt-60*. I asked some stores in my area and one said that Fantagraphics put out a collection of these comics. If there is any truth to this, please let me know, as this artist's work is really fantastic.

Matt Retecki
Arvada, CO

I agree that Vaughn Bodé's work is fantastic. Lucky for us both, several Bodé volumes are still in print. Kitchen Sink Press publishes Poem Toons, while Fantagraphics has Bodé's Erotica, Cheech Wizard, two volumes of Junkwaffel and three volumes of a

THESE LETTERS ARE GUARANTEED HAND-PICKED FOR FRESHNESS

#1
CALL ON THE HIRE POWER!
HEROES FOR HIRE
• Roger Stern
• John Ostrander
• Pascual Ferry
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MARVEL COMICS

Bodé Diary Sketchbook *available. Again, any of these can and should be special-ordered through the comic store of your choice.*

These older items are all that's available, as Vaughn Bodé passed away in 1975.

Dear Wizard,

I'm desperate for *Dawn* comics from Sirius Entertainment. Do you have any idea if they will ever offer a second printing of the current *Dawn* mini-series? I'm also interested in the *Angry Christ Comics* volume and the *Cry for Dawn* series. I got interested in *Dawn* too late. I purchased *Dawn* #4 and I was spellbound by it. Now I want them all. Is there any hope, or will I have to settle for "You snooze, you lose!"?

Debra Vick
Michigan City, IN

According to Sirius Publisher Robb Horan, "Dawn will be collected into single-volume graphic novel form in short order. We're probably looking at the fall of '97.

"Angry Christ is still in print. Any comic shop should be able to order it through Diamond Distributors. And I think the best of stuff from Cry for Dawn is reprinted in Angry Christ, so I recommend just picking that up."

Hey, Wizard Press,

1) Since DC and Marvel have been doing all this neat stuff together, do you think there is any chance they might do the JLA/Avengers crossover they scrapped about a decade ago?

2) I have a copy of *X-Men: Heroes for Hope*, a benefit comic put together by a number of artists and writers for Ethiopian famine relief in 1985. It has three pages in it written by a "Stephen King." Is that the same Stephen King of horror novel fame? If so, has he contributed anything else to comics?

Derek Tyler
Manchester, NH

1) There is no chance that Marvel and DC will do the JLA/Avengers crossover they scrapped back in 1983. Why, you ask? Well, for starters, 14 years have passed. And DC spokesman Scott Nybakken tells us that, "We've got no plans for it. We'd rather look to the future than look back."

Anecdotally, the original art pages to the never-completed book are owned by none other than current Avengers honcho Rob Liefeld.

2) According to Ann Nocenti, co-writer and co-editor of the Heroes for Hope book, the Stephen King who did those three pages is that same Stephen King. She also says that, "He was the most professional of all the writers on that project. He got his script in first and he understood every little change we had to do. He's good friends with Bernie Wrightson, who illustrated his three pages. Bernie brought him in and he really helped the book a lot. He gave us the big name we needed to get on radio, in newspapers, all over. He helped us raise a lot of money."

Although Stephen King has written introductions for Bernie Wrightson's Frankenstein illustrated novel for Marvel and Batman #400, he has no other actual comic story writing to his credit.

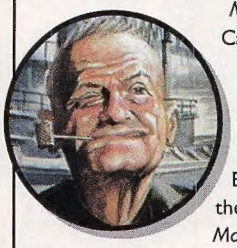
THE BUNNY AWARD

be afraid

Jim takes one of his favorite letters of the month and spotlights it here. There's no logic attached to this, nor is there a prize.

Dear Wizard,

After I read your article on all the things hidden in the pages of *Kingdom Come* in *Wizard* #65, I checked for secret things and people in *Marvels*, Alex Ross' previous masterpiece. Here's what I found:



Marvels #1, page 26: Popeye the sailor man is being interviewed about Captain America.

Marvels #2, page 8: John and Jackie Kennedy are in the elevator with Phil Sheldon.

Marvels #2, page 21: You'll notice the license plate "28IF," the same as the car in *Kingdom Come* and the same as on the Beatles album *Abbey Road*. *Marvels* #2, page 24 shows all four of the Beatles cheering in the crowd for Reed and Sue.

Marvels #3, page 43 shows Alex Ross' dad, "Norman McCay" from *Kingdom Come*. On page 44 of this issue, Stan Lee is sitting at the bar while the bartender pours him a stiff drink.

In *Marvels* #4, page 32, it looks like Jazzy John Romita is driving the cab, a theory supported by the fact that the cab's license plate says "Jazzy."

Did I miss any?

Darren Weik
Lambertville, MI

A few. Try Marvels #2, page 36. Barney Bushkin, publisher of the Daily Globe, barks out orders for two reporters named "Gavin" and "Jay" to get on over to a TV studio where an incident involving the X-Men has just broken out. "Jay Gavin" was the pen name occasionally used by Werner Roth, an X-Men penciler in the '60s. And try Marvels #4, page 19. Is that Superman's pal, Jimmy Olsen, making an unauthorized crossover appearance at a Marvel Universe New Year's Eve party? You tell me.

Thanks for the list, Darren. Any others out there?

Dear Weird Boys,

1) If lightsabers were real, how would they work?

2) If comic fans are called "fanboys" and "Star Trek" fans are called "Trekkies," then what are "Star Wars" fans called?

Eric Thompson
Glendale, AZ

Dear Even Weirder Boy,

1) They're not real, so don't worry about it.

2) Soulless freak abominations who don't realize that what passes for a "plot" in "Star Wars" is actually a col-

lection of the most tired and hackneyed premises gathered from lowbrow genre fiction from the ages.

Hey, look at what we've got here: Rescuing the princess? Gee, I've never seen that one before. The underdog kid from the country who does good and beats the odds? A true original. The villain so evil that his face is hidden behind an expressionless mask? Been done about a thousand times. Relatives who don't even realize they're related until later on in the story? I think that one's appeared in about 100 fairy tales.

"Star Wars" was fun laser-blast special effects, along with the most canny marketing plan ever, and that's about it. Wake up and smell the coffee.

Hope I answered your questions sufficiently.

Dear Wizard,

Hello. I would like you to answer some of these questions that are eating away at my soul.

1) Why haven't they come out with a comic book based on the TV show "Viper"?

2) What is the location of Carnage's secret lair?

3) Why do comic book writers only reveal a character's secret identity to the reader?

4) Why don't they still make KISS comic books?

5) How many comics has Stan Lee written?

6) Do you guys play *Shadowfist* during your lunch break?

7) Who is your favorite character?

Mark Meryhew, Jr.
Augusta, ME

Here's some balm for your soul.

1) They did. Back when "Viper" was on TV (circa 1994), DC published three issues of a Viper comic. Its covers were drawn by the same man who wrote several "Viper" TV episodes, comics veteran Howard Chaykin.

2) Now, if I told you that, it wouldn't be a secret.

3) Because if all the other characters knew, then it wouldn't be a secret.

4) They do. I talked to Gene Simmons Himself of KISS (It was so cool!) and he said that, "We're taking the pages that ran in the Marvel KISS-NATION *book, reprinting them in full magazine size, and adding more pages. It'll be published by Sterling McFadden, a magazine publisher that also does our* KISS Alive Worldwide *mag." Look for the new book in spring of '97 and look for more KISS comics beyond that. Rumor has it that KISS is dotting the "i's" and crossing the "t's" on a new comic contract with a*

Hey! It's Pen Pals

Send your name, address, age, gender and three favorite titles to Pen Pals, c/o the "Magic Words" address on the last page of "Magic Words" (put your age on the envelope) or e-mail your info to MarcEditor@aol.com. If you want your Internet address listed instead, the only way to do this is to post your info in the Pen Pals board on America Online's "Wizard World" forum (keyword: Wizard; look under "Wizard Message Boards").

PEN PALS

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Donnie Hatcher
Age: 13 Sex: Male
7256 Mendota Avenue
Falls Church, VA 22042
Likes: *Gen13, Uncanny X-Men, Avengelyne*

new publisher.

5) Well over 1,000. As to just how many over 1,000, no one seems to know. We even asked Stan "The Man" Lee himself and he said, "How many comics have I written? I have no idea. You might as well ask that Gareb Shamus guy how many slices of cheese he's eaten. All I know is it's a lot." Incidentally, Stan started writing comics in the early 1940s and still writes the occasional Marvel book even today.

6) Is that what they call it? All I know is someone's always trying to get me into some game with a "fist" and "a shadowy place." And they never seem to wear wrist watches. So far, I haven't participated.

7) Marc Wilkofsky.

Dear Wizard,

Can Access, that dimension-bridging guy from *Marvel vs. DC* and *All Access*, bring back the lost heroes from "Heroes Reborn" universe?

Daniel Gotthardt
Carroll, OH

Says John Cerilli, publicist at the Marvel House of Ideas, "Possibly. But since they don't seem to remember their roots in the Marvel Universe, would they go back willingly?"

Dear Wizard,

Here is a question that's been bugging me for a while. It's about the Incredible Hulk. Let's set this up:

First you've got Bruce Banner, a slim, puny bit of a man weighing in at a whopping "122 pounds soaking wet" (That according to Peter David's Hulk novel *What Savage Beast*, which you should read. It's good.). He becomes the Hulk, a big, beefed-up green guy of about 1,150 pounds. When he does, his pants rip, but never fall off. My question:

How does the same pair of pants fit the Hulk *and* Bruce Banner? I've asked some of my Hulk-reading friends, but none could satisfy my curiosity. Can you help?

Sara Amendolara
Staten Island, NY

That John Cerilli guy once again: "His pants are made of an unstable molecule/poly blend that resists most rips and tears. Unfortunately, they're not available at your local Jeans-O-Rama."

Hello Wizard,

Please explain *Deathmate Black*, the Image/Valiant crossover book. I am a huge Gen[13] fan and was wondering if the story is a dream, if time changed, or if the Gen[13] kids are really dead. What goes on here?

Matt Ferguson
Holloman AFB, NM

According to Mike Heisler, WildStorm Productions editor-in-chief, "The events in the Deathmate books took place in a parallel timeline that was created when Void encountered Solar in Null-space. So while some of the Gen[13] members died in that timeline, it has no effect on the members in our timeline, who are clearly still alive."

Dear Jim,

Who would win in a fight between Alex Garner and J. Scott Campbell, the Gen[13] art team?

Kyle Magatelli
Sacramento, CA
Backl20841@aol.com

Well, I asked 'em. Alex said, "I would. There's a reason we call him 'Muscles' Campbell. It's because he's got none. It's meant to be facetious. Plus, if weapons were involved, I could stab him with my ink pen's crow-quill nib, which is much sharper than any pencil."

However, Campbell said, "I'd win, of course. I'd just throw salt in his eyes and then kick him. Hey, it works in pro wrestling."

My money's on Garner. He's a lot bulkier. And he looks like he could take a punch if need be.

Speaking of fights...

Dear Wizard,

Preacher is the best comic out there and if anyone disagrees, I'll fight them.

William Caldwell
Fanwood, NJ

Okay. I like Preacher a lot, but I like Astro City and Sandman Mystery Theatre even more. So I'll meet you under the flagpole, right after school. Be there or I'll tell everyone you're chicken.

Dear Magic Words,

Why does Rogue wear a belt when she's not wearing any pants?

Chad Wm. Porter
Weston, Ontario, Canada

Before all you perverts start buying up back issues of X-Men, please be advised that while Rogue does not wear pants, she does wear some sort of superhero-y leotard thing. Marvel says that everyone's favorite Southern belle just knows how to accessorize, and she wears the belt because it's darned stylish.

Dear Wizard,

Has Jean Grey ever used her mind-reading powers to cheat at "Battleship"? I know I would.

Lee Long
Rockford, IL

According to Marvel Mutant Master

PENPALS

Angi Updike
Age: 20 Sex: Female
P.O. Box 539
Ashley, IN 46705
Likes: *Dawn, Angela, Lady Death*

Michael H. Jenner
Age: 21 Sex: Male
244 T-A Red Cedar Ct.
Chesapeake, VA 23320
Likes: X-titles, *Savage Dragon, Spawn*

Trever Cameron
Age: 17 Sex: Male
14513 Pinma Ave.
Norwalk, CA 90650
Likes: X-titles, Spider-titles, "Heroes Reborn"

Buzz
Age: 19 Sex: Male
P.O. Box 444
Utica, IL 61373
Likes: Practically anything by Image (especially *Spawn*), X-titles

Robert Krone, 15/m
overpower3@aol.com
X-Men, Wolverine, Superman

Robb Welch, 11/m
Onslout@aol.com
"Heroes Reborn," *Ghost Rider, X-Factor*

Marlan Harris, 22/m
mar93@aol.com
Vertigo, *Starman*, anything good

David W. Nix, 26/m
Nixdavid@aol.com
Spawn, Sin City, Ash

Adam Suter, 16/m
EvoDV8@aol.com
Gen[13], Witchblade, The X-Files

Will Cannon, 16/m
WillCannon@aol.com
X-Men, U. X-Men, Gen[13]

John Cerilli, "No, she hasn't. However, Professor Xavier did just prior to the whole 'Onslaught' thing, and look where that got him."

Dear Wizard,
Do you have a web sight?
Walter V. Wisneski
Valley Stream, NY

Oh, yeah. I've sighted many webs in my time. Most have been in dank corners of dark basements and many others have been in the pages of Amazing Spider-Man. *But resident online guru Buddy Scalera tells me that if I don't mention that we have a "web site" that can be accessed through* www.wizardpress.com *and via America Online at keyword:* Wizard, *he'll sit on me. And that's not too pleasant a thought.*

Yes, that's a fat joke.

Dear Wizard,
Can you send me a note telling me whether or not I've made it?
Joe Getler
Runnemede, NJ

Look, if I have to send you a note telling you whether or not you've ever made it, one of two things is happening here. Either:

1) Your life is deadly dull, or...

2) You're missing feeling in some bodily extremities where you really ought to have some feeling.

Either way, I'd go see a doctor if I were you.

That's it. Time for me to make...something or another. Until next month, I remain...

—Jim McLauchlin

Jim McLauchlin has very loose stool for such an uptight guy. Were his hair parted down the middle, he'd very much resemble a wood screw.

Send letters to:
Magic Words
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920
or e-mail us at WizWords@AOL.Com

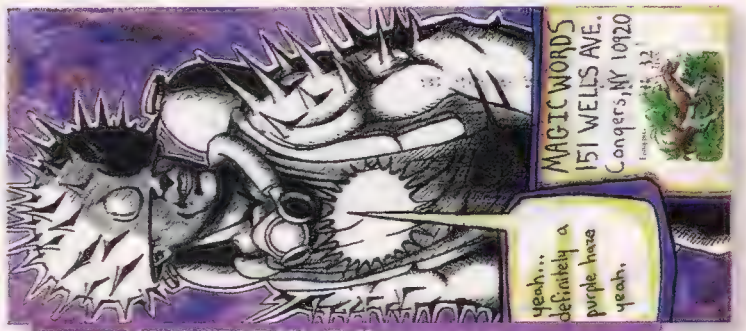
LETTER ART

Fans who got their letter art printed this month will each receive an issue of *Groo the Wanderer* autographed by Sergio Aragonés, plus a copy of this issue of *Wizard* signed by the entire *Wizard* creative staff, a snazzy *Wizard* T-shirt and a funky *Wizard* cap! The creator of the best envelope wins the signed comic, issue, shirt and cap, plus a piece of original art by Aragonés! (Thanks for the loot, Sergio!) Artists: Please include a clearly printed return address **and a list of characters depicted** on the **back** of your envelope.

envelope of the month

DRAGON PATROL Bernie G. Leal Ft. Stockton, TX

THE PRIZE



SEWER URCHIN Eddie Fuller

SPIDER-MAN'S STORY Jason Boutin

"THE ALF-FILES" Ted Dumitrescu
Moreno Valley, CA

'REBORN' AGAIN

With 'Heroes Reborn' ending, creators jockey for slots on Marvel books

Paul Schindler

Mark Waid back writing ***Captain America***? **George Pérez** penciling ***Avengers*** again? It could happen, and sooner than you think.

"Heroes Reborn," the controversial Marvel Comics reboot plan that took four main titles—*Avengers, Captain America, Fantastic Four* and *Iron Man*—and handed them over to former Marvel stars **Jim Lee** and **Rob Liefeld** for a new look, is coming to a close.

A 12-month plan intended to jump-start four core Marvel books with sagging sales, "Reborn" certainly succeeded but with some definite downsides. The move caused friction within Marvel editorial because the books were taken away from Marvel employees. Another bone of contention was the fact that sales on half the pre-"Reborn" books were on the rise—creators **Mark Waid** and **Ron Garney** were building a strong fan following on *Captain America*, and the art style of new *Fantastic Four* penciler **Carlos Pacheco** (now on *X-Men*) appealed to fans. And once the "Reborn" project kicked in, there were complaints of production problems with the outside studios, including lateness of books.

But while Marvel wouldn't comment on the future of "Reborn," Lee and Liefeld did. "My deal is through issue #12 only," said Lee, overseer for *Fantastic Four* and *Iron Man*. "I've discussed continuing with [Marvel], but they haven't committed to anything yet." Liefeld, the caretaker of *Avengers and Captain America*, said, "Marvel called and asked about doing more books. I told Marvel that I have no interest in continuing *Cap*. I had a Cap story to tell, and I told it. After #12, I just assumed it was going back to Marvel anyway. I'm looking forward to closure on these."

Heroes Return?

Sources say that "Reborn" will conclude with the 12th issues of all four books, closing a chapter in Marvel lore. So what's next? A good question with no concrete answers.

Most observers are sure that the "Heroes Reborn" characters, whose 12-month adventures take place in a separate "pocket universe," will be folded back into the "regular" Marvel Universe. Sources within Marvel Comics have indicated that September 1997 marks "Heroes Return," an event that reunites the two universes. **Peter David**'s name has been mentioned as a possible writer for a "Heroes Return" project, but when questioned, he said, "Aside from the fact that I'm working on something called 'Heroes Return,' I have no comment."

What's rumored to be planned is a self-contained, four-issue mini-series that reintroduces the "Reborn" characters back into the original Marvel Universe. In fact, Marvel sources revealed that nondescript artwork taken from "Heroes Return" is planned to be posted on Marvel's website (www.marvelonline.com) each month, leading up to the "official" return of the characters.

But even after the heroes return, what will happen to the "Reborn" books?

"We're talking to a lot of people and figuring out the best thing to do with these books," said Marvel Editor Jason Liebig. "At this point, it hasn't been decided who's doing what."

Who's Been Approached?

George Pérez, a popular *Avengers* artist, has been approached about taking the artistic reins on his old book. "I'm very interested in penciling *Avengers*," said Pérez. "In a conversation with [Marvel Editor] Ralph Macchio, he talked about the possibility of my working on *Avengers* again. He basically told me, 'If we're doing *Avengers*, you'll be doing *Avengers*.' " Macchio confirmed this: "George has

Al Ortega

Are Busiek, Kesel and Waid in the mix for "Heroes Return"?

definitely been asked to do *Avengers*. He and I spoke, and I just offhandedly said, 'How'd you like to pencil *Avengers* when the book comes back?' George thought it was terrific and things are going from there."

Pérez pegs former *Avengers* scribe Waid as a possible writer for both a new *Avengers* and *Captain America*. Waid is unsure of his status. "We've had deep, meaningful discussions, but nothing has materialized yet," he said. "I'm interested. I hope something can be worked out." Waid's former *Captain America* cohort, artist Ron Garney, has also been approached to return to *Cap*. "It's 85-90 percent likely that I'll go back to *Captain America* with Mark writing it," Garney said.

Who's Pitching?

Many other writers and artists have made informal pitches. **Karl Kesel**, former writer of Marvel's *Fantastic Four 2099*, said he was solicited to send in an outline for *Fantastic Four*. "I just wrote up a bunch of ideas about what I'd do if I had *FF* to write," Kesel said. "I hope something works out, but I'm not holding my breath." Marvel insiders also connect *Superman* writer **Dan Jurgens** in the hunt for Marvel's cosmic quartet.

Kurt Busiek, writer of Marvel's *Thunderbolts*, has pitched for *Iron Man*. "I sent in an outline, and there's been nothing beyond that." Getting in line with Busiek are former *Iron Man* teammates **David Michelinie** and **Bob Layton**. Michelinie said he and Layton "came up with a two-page proposal of what we'd do with the character."

There's also talk that ***Thor***, the only leftover from "Heroes Reborn" without a title of his own, will be relaunched with a #1 issue. **Warren Ellis**, who wrote the character briefly, had been pegged as the writer, but Ellis said he hadn't been approached. Marvel wouldn't comment on the relaunch.

'Reborn' Return?

So where does all this pitching leave Lee and Liefeld? "In terms of the involvement they're looking for, it's very difficult for me as a person doing business on my own," said Lee. "I have ideas to give for *Fantastic Four* and *Iron Man*, but they want me penciling *FF*. My guess is that without that direct participation, I won't be working on them."

Liefeld, however, is hopeful of working on a different Marvel project. "We're discussing the future of **Bucky**, and doing something with her outside of *Captain America*. And they're [Marvel] now discussing a family of new titles, maybe four new books with us. The thing that appealed to me most about 'Heroes Reborn' was the clean slate. I want to take the stuff that hasn't sold before and make it sell. I think that I can work that way."

New or Old Continuity?

Another question is whether the "clean slate" established with "Heroes Reborn" will remain intact when the four books return to the Marvel Universe. Or will the heroes return to their old origins and histories?

"My understanding is that since they just did a relaunch," offered Michelinie, "the fans won't sit still for another #1 issue. So they'll be carrying on from the point before 'Heroes Reborn' started."

Pérez agreed. "I would only be looking to draw the classic Avengers," he said. Another freelancer approached by Marvel said that the return is the key point: "There's so much in this that's up in the air. It's changing on a day-to-day basis. [Will it be] the 'Heroes Reborn' continuity? The old one? Or something completely new? No one knows. And that colors the decision to do these books. What Marvel wants to do with these books' continuity will decide who does these books."

But whatever happens, it's a win-win situation for Marvel. Even if Lee and Liefeld bolt, Marvel can take its pick of the litter in the creative community with top talent racing to handle the four (and perhaps five, with *Thor*) books. Plus, all eyes will be on Marvel and the "Heroes Reborn" titles over the next several months. Busiek summed it up best: "Even if I end up not writing *Iron Man*, just as a longtime fan, I'm looking forward to seeing what will happen." ■ *Jim McLauchlin (with additional reporting by Matthew Senreich and Matthew Brady)*

Waid and Garney are "85-90 percent likely" to return to *Captain America*

New Marvel title, Pope C.O.R.P.S., debuts with new spokeswoman Sister Mary Howitzer. "I'm a pent-up penguin, dispensing 12 inches of justice! Umm... that being my ruler," screeched comic instrument of Catholic vengeance.

New "Heroes Reborn" Fry Guys unveiled at local comic show. "Hey... they took the 'i't 'M' off the Fry Guy's head!" exclaimed horrified fan. "And they're no longer part of regular 'Happy Meal' continuity!"

Massacre at LensCrafters traced back to evil Trekkies. "Trekkers, dammit! We're Trekkers!!" screamed near-sighted abominations before being beaten and ground into beef patties.

ahead

MOORE GOES EXTREME!

ROBINSON WRITES 'CABLE'!

AND COMPANY UPDATES!

MOORE HERALDS 'JUDGMENT DAY' FOR EXTREME

Judgment Day has arrived for **Extreme Studios**.

"Now that we're no longer with **Image Comics**, we have an all-new opportunity to create a jumping-on point for new readers," said **Rob Liefeld**, president of Extreme Studios. "We wanted a fresh take on our characters since they aren't connected to **WildC.A.T.s** or **Spawn** anymore."

In May, Extreme Studios will publish *Judgment Day*, a three-issue mini-series written by **Alan Moore** (*Watchmen*, *Supreme*), which will have major ramifications for the entire Extreme Universe. A host of popular artists will provide the artwork, including former Moore collaborator **Dave Gibbons** (*Watchmen*), **Ian Churchill**, **Dan Jurgens**, **Adam Pollina** and Liefeld himself. In addition, Dave Gibbons will draw the covers to all three issues, which combine to form a triptych image. "The story spans from the very beginning of time and flows through different ages into the future," said Liefeld. "I'll draw all the Youngblood sequences. It's been a while, but these are my babies, and after a much-needed break, it's nice to come back."

Judgment Day will feature a murder mystery of epic proportions as a **Youngblood** member is murdered by a teammate. When the culprit is finally captured, Supreme will call together the Earth's superheroes to pass judgment on the murderer. The verdict promises to radically alter the lives of **Supreme**, **Glory**, **Prophet**, the **NewMen** and, of course, Youngblood.

Through *Judgment Day*, Extreme Studios is looking to establish a core line of four titles by fall 1997. However, Extreme has no plans to introduce all-new number one issues. "This is not a *Zero Hour* or *Crisis on Infinite Earths* where everything is restarted," said Liefeld. "We're uncovering a secret and using it to tell the story of all our characters. And like 'Heroes Reborn,' it serves as a jumping-on point.

"When superheroes begin murdering each other, what are the ramifications?" asked Liefeld. "I think Alan [Moore] has been watching the O.J. trial and seeing that when people [who are] considered stars do vial acts, it threatens humanity. That's what *Judgment Day* is about." ■ *Matthew Senreich*

Character sketches of Bram the Berserk (far left) and Space Hunter for the *Judgement Day*

Ellis and Dillon Unite for Weird 'Gen[13] Annual'

And you thought *you've* seen some strange things on spring break? When **Gen[13]** goes on vacation, it'll be an *Annual* event.

"The premise, I guess, is that **John Lynch** is a complete bastard," said **Warren Ellis**, writer of the first-ever *Gen[13] Annual* for 1997. Lynch, the mentor of WildStorm's popular teen team, "has taken the Gen[13] kids on spring break to London, a terrible thing to do, since London is much 'colder' than California." Once in London, things get hairy when Lynch and the Gen[13] kids hit the ominous Wolfshead Pub.

"It's the weirdest pub in the world," said Ellis. "Lynch was introduced to it when he was working in International Operations. It's become a hole for all the weirdest bastards in Britain. Lynch rather likes it." What Lynch doesn't like is what happens once they arrive. "One of the girls gets her purse snatched. The girls pursue the robber into the basement. The boys aren't in any shape to help, since they're in a drinking contest with some of the locals. While this is happening, Lynch gets taken—at gunpoint—to a 'private party' upstairs. Since this all happens in such a strange pub, the girls find that the basement is...not exactly what it seems."

As strange as the pub goings-on are, the choice of artist for this book may be stranger yet: **Steve Dillon**, noted for a look very unlike *Gen[13]*'s slick style in Vertigo titles like ***Hellblazer*** and ***Preacher***. "They say that change is good, and you don't get much more of a change from *Preacher* than *Gen[13]*," Dillon said. "I like the attitude of the book. It's very lighthearted. It's a very fun book."

The 40-page *Gen[13] Annual* #1 is scheduled to ship to comic stores this May. ■ *JM*

BUZZ BOX

The inside scoop on the comic industry

- In late summer, **Marvel** is planning a new imprint called "Marvel Import" which reprints foreign-licensed Marvel publications. Two known projects will include **manga-styled** English-translated **Spider-Man** and **Wolverine** books from Japan. In addition to "Import," Marvel also plans to release a horror line called "Marvel Macabre" and a children's line called "Marvel Kids."
- Rumor has it that **DC Comics** is planning a relaunch of a portion of its titles that will "recreate the Silver Age," said sources. Heroes like **Flash** and **Green Lantern**, along with low-tier characters like Atom and the Secret Six, have been rumored to be part of this. However, sources indicate that these relaunches will take place in an alternate reality that will not affect their DCU counterparts.
- ***Marvel Team-Up*** lives again, say Marvel sources. Starring **Spider-Man**, the title will once again pair the web-head with another Marvel hero. Sources say it will be released in late summer.
- **Garth Ennis** will not be scripting ***The Darkness*** after issue #6, though sources say he may stay on as plotter/consultant.
- Sources at Marvel say that *Captain America* and *Avengers* writer **Jeph Loeb** will write a third **"Heroes Reborn"** title: ***Iron Man***, starting with issue #8 in April and running through issue #12.
- Sources say that **Marvel** and **Top Cow** are looking to do **"Devil's Reign 2"** in January 1998.
- Rumors are circulating that **KISS** will license its likeness to **Todd McFarlane** and **Image Comics** to produce an all-new *KISS* comic book series, and not Marvel Comics where KISS has previously created comic books.

CORRECTION

In *Wizard*#68's "Wizard News," we reported that **Bastion** is a mutant, when in fact he is not. We goofed and apologize for the error.

byte this

WHAT'S UP ON WIZARD WORLD

Exclusives? We got your exclusives right here! From now on, if you want to talk with anyone official from **Harris**, **Event**, **Lightning** and several small Indy companies, you're gonna have to come to "Wizard World" exclusively. That means "Wizard World" will be the total source for fans of books including ***Vampirella***, ***CyberFrog***, ***Ash***, ***22 Brides***, ***Hellina***, ***Rib***, ***Ship of Fools*** and many others.

Fans of **Amanda Connor** will get hot under the collar when they see the exclusive pictures we have of the popular *Vampirella* artist. (See below!) Amanda posed for **Jimmy Palmiotti** for this issue's "So you Wanna Be a Bride" 22 Brides Contest. These are wild, sexy photos of Amanda with a gun. Download 'em!

And speaking of *22 Brides*, Palmiotti reports that pages 12-20, 22-25 and 26 of *Ash/22 Brides #2* were somehow "lost." If you have any idea of their whereabouts, there is a reward. Drop Jimmy an e-mail at **Palmio@aol.com**.

On America Online, Keyword: Wizard.

CHAT HIGHLIGHTS FOR THE SPECIAL EVENTS ROOM

APRIL 14 (MONDAY)
- **BREAKING IN** Featuring: **David Campiti**

Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

APRIL 19 (SATURDAY)
- **INDY COMICS CHAT**

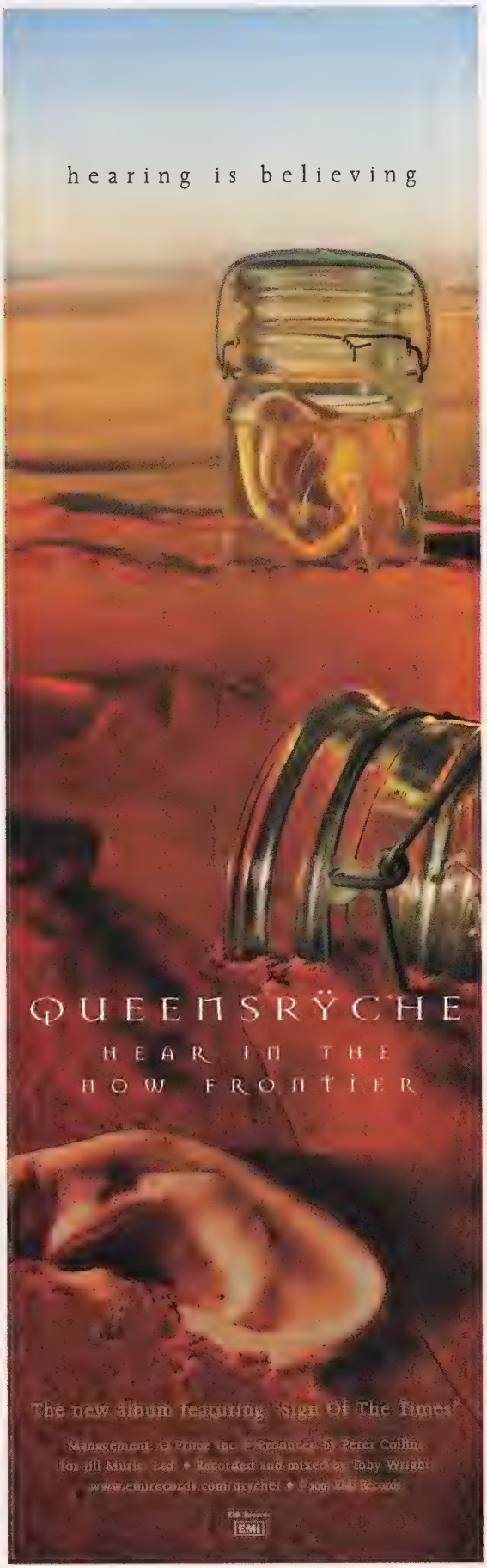
Time: 9-10 p.m. (EST)

APRIL 24 (THURSDAY)
- **MYSTERY GUEST** Featuring **Joanna Sandsmark & Mystery Guest**

Time: 8-9 p.m. (EST)

Check online for full chat schedules including club-hosted chats

■ *Buddy Scalera* (**WizardTGTC@aol.com**)



Catching Up With...

JOE KELLY AND 'DAREDEVIL'

With Karl Kesel's departure from *Daredevil*, Joe Kelly (*Deadpool*) has been named the new writer beginning with issue #365. Will Kelly maintain Kesel's light-hearted romp on the book or will he revert back to the Frank Miller-like dark-and-moody storylines? *Wizard* decided to call Joe and see what he's got in store for the Man Without Fear.

Photo courtesy of Joe Kelly

What can we expect to happen in *Daredevil* in the next few months?

We're tying up many of the loose ends that Karl [Kesel] left. We'll build to a cool dimax between Mr. Fear and Matt Murdock. Mr. Fear wants Daredevil out of the equation; he wants to disgrace Matt Murdock. Matt will have to hold his own under public scrutiny against Mr. Fear, and he'll be unable to fall back on Daredevil. We are also trying to work the "Law & Order" angle by taking cases from real life and [putting] a Marvel spin on some highly publicized cases.

What do you have in mind for the supporting cast?

Karen Page is going to start getting a lot of notice as Paige Angel on WFSK radio. I think that will start leading her away from her life with Matt. Part of Karen's character is that she always wanted to be a star. In the Miller days, she went away to California and became a drugged-out porn queen. She might be able to redeem herself now and I think it'll be tough for her to turn her back on this. Foggy's sister Candice will also become part of the cast. She'll be an entry point into this weird, "Millennium"-like conspiracy subplot that will involve cults. And also, Kathy Malper, from the "Fall of the Kingpin" storyline, is going to come back to the cast. She'll play up the soap opera element in the book, giving Matt a love triangle.

Are there any cameos planned by other Marvel heroes?

The *Annual* that hits in June will have Deadpool and ties up the loose end left from the *Daredevil: Man Without Fear* mini-series. When Matt tracked down the people responsible for the death of his father, he ended up kicking this prostitute out a window. That's given us a lot of pause and we'll [resolve] that. The Black Widow will pop up. And there has been some talk about some X-characters. I'm playing with this idea of a shadow realm in New York City and it has ties to the Crimson Dawn, so that might be the bridge.

Do you plan to have Elektra show up?

That's a card people are waiting for, but I don't think we'll see an Elektra crossover for a while.

What other villains will Daredevil encounter?

We're going for an Al Capone/Elliot Ness thing between the Eel and Daredevil. I want to get back to seeing villains in their alter egos. The Eel, at night, is a bad underworld boss. But during the day, he's the slick businessman. He'll interact with Matt in the courtroom and with Daredevil at night. Other villains will include Molten Man and a new Gladiator character.

Do you plan to keep a lighthearted tone on the book?

I don't think you can swing the pendulum back to the Miller stuff and I definitely like Karl's take. Daredevil is a weird adrenaline junky, a loose-cannon guy. He is someone that can be fun to hang out with until they get pushed passed the line. We'll see him lose his cool and we'll see how he treats villains when his emotions are cut loose. I'll definitely keep some humor that Karl set up, but I want to try and get a little more grit in the book. ■ *MS*

Gary Frank Flies From 'Supergirl'

Penciler **Gary Frank**'s last issue of DC Comics' ***Supergirl*** will be #9. "There were a lot of things that came together and made me realize I wasn't interested in drawing the book anymore," Frank said. "There were no personality clashes or anything like that. **Peter [David**, *Supergirl*'s writer] and I were always thinking alike on the direction for the book. Essentially, the book just lost its shine for me."

David, who formerly collaborated with Frank on Marvel's ***The Incredible Hulk***, was far more willing to admit some blame for the loss of the popular penciler. "I feel responsible. One of the reasons Gary cited for leaving the book is that I wasn't turning the plots out fast enough," David said. "There would be a week or so when he'd have nothing to do. I understand the situation—I've been in the place of waiting around for art to come in so I could script it.

"I was really laboring over the *Supergirl* plots," David continued. "The ironic thing is that I have actually caught up now."

DC has not yet named a new permanent penciler for the series, although one of the names bandied about is **Amanda Conner**, currently penciling ***Vampirella*** for Harris. Conner had previously worked with David on Claypool's *Soulsearchers and Company*. However, Conner's commitment to *Vampirella* prevents her from taking on *Supergirl* for quite a while, perhaps as much as six months, according to *Supergirl* editor Frank Pittarese. He also noted that while the search for a permanent artist continues, *Supergirl* #10 will be drawn by Leonard Kirk (*Ultragirl*) and #11 by Greg Land (*Nightwing* mini-series). ■ *Patrick Daniel O'Neill*

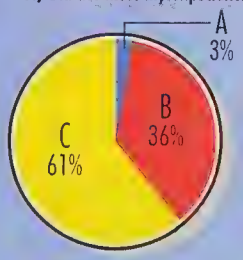
Question of the Month

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away…

If you haven't noticed these days, "**Star Wars**" is the biggest thing since Eli Whitney invented the cotton gin (we're educated here at *Wizard*). And besides hitting the big screen with all its special effects jazzed up, there were 4 1/2 minutes of ALL NEW FOOTAGE!!! Can you tamper with a classic and get away with it? That's just what we wanted to know, so we used our "Wizard World" forum on America Online to ask our online friends the following:

How did you perceive "Star Wars: The Special Edition"?

A) Did not meet my expectations; **B)** Met my expectations; **C)** Exceeded my expectations



We also asked the following questions:

• What was your favorite new scene in "Star Wars: The Special Edition": The Jabba the Hutt/Han Solo exchange which also featured Boba Fett (**37%**); the new Mos Eisley scenes (**25%**); the added Biggs Darklighter scene (**15%**); the enhanced X-Wing attack on the Death Star (**14%**); the updated Death Star explosion (**6%**); the new chasm echoes when Luke and Leia are escaping from the Stormtroopers (**2%**); or other (**1%**)?

Though many fans weren't impressed by the noticeably "thinner" Jabba, they found that the Jabba scene added depth to the overall "Star Wars Trilogy" storyline. Plus, the sheer sight of Boba Fett in "Star Wars" made fans go loopy.

• Do you think George Lucas should have tampered with the original footage: yes (**94%**) or no (**6%**)?

While many fans hold the original "Star Wars" dear to their hearts, they also overwhelmingly believe that George Lucas should have the power to alter the original "Star Wars" to fit his vision.

• If you had a choice, which version would you watch: "Star Wars: The Special Edition" (**92%**) or the original "Star Wars" (**8%**)?

Don't let the numbers fool you. Many fans would love to watch *both* versions, but the majority prefer the new version. As one fan put it, "I've seen 'Star Wars' over a 100 times and know it backwards and forward. Now I have four-and-a-half new minutes of footage to examine a 100 times, *plus* the old stuff." ■ *Conrad Bain*

Miller Gives Sin City Some 'Family Values'

"I've got three words for you: **Miho** on rollerblades."

That's **Frank Miller**'s summation of ***Sin City: Family Values***, the most massive single-volume tale to date of the town without pity. How massive is it? "It continues to grow every day," said Lou Bank, vice-president of sales and marketing for Dark Horse Comics. "Right now, I think it's at 120 pages and still going."

Miller, the creator/writer/artist of *Sin City*, pegs the final page count at 128. *Family Values* will be released as a single volume, most likely in both hardcover and softcover editions, by Dark Horse in late summer. The tale focuses on Miho, the silent-but-deadly female assassin introduced in ***Sin City: A Dame to Kill For***. "I love to draw her," Miller said. "She adds so much energy to every page she's on. And *Sin City* readers have really responded to her. I get more mail and more response on her than I do for any other character except for Marv, the original [*Sin City* protagonist]."

Family Values will also feature **Dwight**, the main character from *Big Fat Kill*, and will basically be "a Mafia story," according to Miller. "With a title like *Family Values*, we've got to bring the Family—in this case, a mob family and their family business."

But the main focus remains Miho. "Yes, she is on rollerblades in this story, and she knows how to use them. She also uses a *lot* of different weapons. I don't know where she keeps them all, but I've learned not to ask." Not that Miho would answer, anyway. Miho appears all throughout *Big Fat Kill*, but does not have a single line of dialogue to her credit—she remains mute in *Family Values*. "She's got nothing to say," said Miller, speaking for Miho. "Her actions speak much louder than words anyway." ■ *JM*

Family Values **will feature Dwight, star of *The Big Fat Kill***

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TVT RECORDS

'Spawn Month' Reveals Angela's Secrets

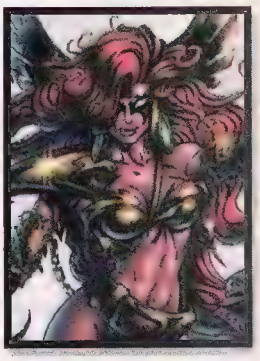
According to **Todd McFarlane**, there's only one thing readers wanna know, and during May's "Spawn Month," they'll get it. That's right, **Angela**'s origin will *finally* be revealed.

"This is the thing my readers have been demanding to know—what *she's* all about," said Spawn creator McFarlane. Early this summer, fans will finally learn the origin of Angela, the 100,000-year-old Hellspawn-hunting freelance angel, when they read ***Curse of the Spawn* #9**, hitting comics stores in May. And Angela, who's been a perplexing mix of enemy and ally to Spawn since her first appearance in *Spawn* #9, has been a favorite of *Spawn* readers for some time now.

But that's not all readers will get during "Spawn Month."

They'll also be treated to McFarlane's pencils (at least a bit) for the first time in a year. Due to other commitments, including helming a toy company and overseeing movie and TV projects, McFarlane has been unable to pencil anything Spawn-related since *Spawn* #50. For the cover of *Curse of the Spawn* #9, McFarlane and regular *Curse of the Spawn* penciler **Dwayne Turner** handle the chores, while **Greg Capullo** and **Danny Miki** ink.

And that's just the icing on the cake of "Spawn Month." In ***Spawn* #62**, Spawn becomes **Al Simmons**—the man he was before his untimely death—for just 24 hours. "That's the big one," said McFarlane Productions Marketing Director **Beau Smith**. "He's only got one day to be the man he used to be...and *he* knows it. That's not a lot of time." Spawn will have a busy agenda, possibly visiting his wife, **Wanda Blake**, or perhaps paying a social call to **Jason Wynn**, the man who ordered Simmons' death.



Learn Angela's origin in May

Spawnophiles may also want to be on the lookout for a new, retooled "**Cosmic Angela**" action figure, available to comic retailers who order combinations of *Curse of the Spawn* #9 and *Spawn* #62 in increments of 100. "It's something we're probably going to do every year in May," McFarlane said. "I want everyone to know that May is *our* month for Spawn." ■ *JM*

company updates

ACCLAIM COMICS

In May, Bob Layton returns to Acclaim as a writer/inker with a 12-issue *Dr. Tomorrow* maxi-series to be penciled by Don Perlin, Dick Giordano, Gil Kane and Neal Adams. The series chronicles the entire career of a superhero.

CARTOON BOOKS

Kudos to creator Jeff Smith for the inclusion of "Stupid, Stupid Rat Creatures!" in *Cyber Speak: An Online Dictionary*, by Andy Thnatka, which lists the *Bone*-ism as a frequent Internet exclamation of disapproval.

CHAOS! COMICS

Evil Ernie: Destroyer (formerly titled *Evil Ernie: Quest for Nukes*), a new nine-issue mini-series, debuts in May.

COMIC BOOK LEGAL DEFENSE FUND

A small bit of good news for John Hunter and Michael Kennedy, the Planet Comics retailers. In February, Oklahoma City's Criminal Court of Appeals decided not to bring the misdemeanor charge of "keeping for sale obscene material" back up to a felony. The actual trial should take place this spring or fall. . . A Florida court recently denied comic creator Michael Diana's request for an appeal of his obscenity conviction, meaning he must begin serving his sentence, which includes a $3,000 fine, three years probation, psychiatric counseling, attending a journalism ethics course, no creating of anything "obscene" and no interaction with anyone under 18. The CBLDF may decide to bring Diana's case to a higher court (such as the U.S. Supreme Court), which would be very costly.

CRUSADE ENTERTAINMENT

Crusade has launched Crusade Japan, an international partnership with Japan's Horihachi Toys which enters the company into the Japanese comic book market and brings Crusade's Japanese merchandise to America. Horihachi will now distribute Crusade's Banzai and Rising Sun editions, which sport variant covers and Japanese logos and cover text.

DARK HORSE COMICS

In June comes the *Monkeyman and O'Brien* trade paperback, collecting the three-issue mini-series and the one-shot. . . June also sees the release of *Superman/Madman Hullabaloo*, a three-issue mini-series by Mike Allred, teaming the Man of Steel with Snap City's favorite yo-yo-carryin' hero. "See Supes and Madman trade places (And body parts!) in each other's universe!" . . . June's *Dirty Pair: Dangerous Acquaintances* collects Adam Warren's early *Dirty Pair* mini-series in one 128-page $12.95 volume. . . June's two-issue *Aliens: Havoc* series written by Mark Schultz features 40—yes, 40—different artists, including Art Adams, Geof Darrow, Kelley Jones and tons more! . . . The first issue of the five-part *Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi—Fall of the Sith Empire* series ships this June.

IMAGE COMICS

• HOMAGE COMICS

There's a new book headin' to the Homage stable this June! Steven Grant and Mike Zeck's *Damned* (previously known as *Lawless*) stars ex-con Mick Thorne, whose promise to a dying cellmate brings him to the city of New Covenant, where he's suddenly ensconced in murder, mystery and mayhem.

• SHADOWLINE, INK

The Badger is back in May in a new series by Mike Baron and Matt Roach.

• TOP COW COMICS

Ascension, a new title from David Finch, is slated as Top Cow's next ongoing series and set for November. . . A *Tales of the Witchblade #1/2* offer is slated for *Wizard #71*.

• WILDSTORM PRODUCTIONS

In case you didn't know it, May is unofficially "StormWatch Month"! Your favorite StormWatch characters will be poppin' up in a number of places. *Grifter #11* co-stars Cannon. *WildStorm Spotlight #4* stars Hellstrike and his enemy Deathtrap, and the 40-page *Gen¹³ Annual #1* (By Warren Ellis and *Preacher*'s own Steve Dillon!) sees the Gen¹³ kids headin' off to London, where they visit the Wolfshead Pub, a familiar site to you StormWatch fans! Plus, be sure to pick up *StormWatch #48*, the kick-off for a major three-part story arc entitled "Change or Die," which concludes with the entire world either changed or . . . dead! . . . *Backlash #32* wraps up the current story arc, and is the final issue of the series. But don't worry, because Brett Booth will be doing an all-new team book called *WildCORE* starring Backlash and Taboo. It should hit sometime later this year.

MARVEL COMICS

Punisher has been canceled as of issue #18, shipping in April. *Punisher* artist Tom Lyle will be penciling 1997's *Amazing Spider-Man* and *Untold Tales of Spider-Man* annuals.

PENTHOUSE COMIX

Fantasy artist Boris Vallejo will paint the covers for a three-issue stint spanning from *Penthouse Comix #21* to #23.

TOPPS COMICS

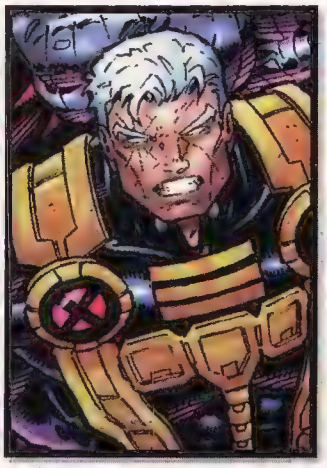
The Lost World #1, the new "Jurassic Park" comic debuts in May with a Walt Simonson cover and a $2.95 price.

James Robinson is 'Cable' Ready

Wiring up to ***Cable***, **James Robinson** is planning the future of the popular X-character.

Marvel Comics has announced that Robinson will become the new regular writer on the popular *Cable* series, beginning with issue #45 in May. Robinson, who currently writes DC's ***Starman*** and ***Leave it to Chance*** for Image, is also scheduled to write four issues of ***Generation X*** beginning in May. "Now's just the right time [to work on the X-books], and to do *Cable* hit me like an epiphany," said Robinson. "I just felt that the book had been a bit rudderless lately and I really felt I could turn it around."

Robinson is looking to broaden the appeal of *Cable* to outside the X-Universe by making the character more integrated in the Marvel Universe. "I think that *Cable* is a book that is too mired in confusing X-Men continuity, and I'd like to make this book a bit more accessible to new readers," he said. "To make him more a part of the bigger Marvel Universe, I want to use the antithesis of an X-character—a character you'd never expect to see in *Cable*, like the **Black Panther**."



Robinson wants *Cable* to be "more accessible" to readers

But despite these plans, Robinson will not take Cable completely out of X-Men continuity. In fact, Robinson is already hatching schemes to feature the **Hellfire Club** in upcoming issues. "I'm going to try and make the Hellfire Club Cable's principle present-day foes," said Robinson. "I'm going to use the link between Cable and **Madelyne Pryor**, and then her [connection] to the Hellfire Club."

Robinson's fans need not worry that his assignment on *Cable* will affect his other writing projects though. "No one should worry. I'm not leaving *Starman* or *Leave it to Chance* any time soon," he said. "*Cable* is just a great opportunity, and this is just the right offer at the right time that appeals to me greatly. So I couldn't pass it up." ■ *MS*

NEWS BITES

Jimenez Fills in for Porter on 'JLA'

Oscar Jimenez will take over the penciling duties of *JLA* from **Howard Porter** for two months beginning with issue #8 in June. Depending on Porter's schedule, Jimenez may remain on the book for an additional month or two. At the very least, Jimenez will draw *JLA* #8 and #9.

Porter will take the short break from *JLA* to pencil the upcoming 64-page ***JLA/WildC.A.T.s***, scheduled to be released this summer. "It's only a brief hiatus," said Porter. "I'm definitely staying with *JLA*."

Jimenez's stint on *JLA* will be a two-part story centering around an updated version of the classic Justice League foe The Key. In addition, Jimenez will get the opportunity to draw the first appearance of the new Green Arrow in *JLA*, with issue #8. ■ *MS*

Marvel Closes Heroes World, Goes Exclusive With Diamond

In late February, Marvel comics started arriving via **Diamond Comic Distributors**. Diamond handles direct-market (comic store) distribution for **DC**, **Image and Dark Horse Comics**, among others, on an exclusive basis. So what's this mean for comic readers?

Marvel comics will arrive in comic stores on Wednesdays, with all other publishers' offerings. Marvel has also closed down its company-owned distributor, **Heroes World**. Diamond promises fulfillment of reorders more quickly than Heroes World. By combining Marvel orders with material that Diamond already offers, retailers may realize better discounts and greater profitability. All Marvel products listed in the separate, Marvel-exclusive *Mega Marvel* catalog are still listed there. This change impacts comic specialty stores only, so readers who buy Marvel from newsstands or the local Wal-Mart will be unaffected. ■ *JM*

Colan Returns to 'Daredevil'

The man who penciled more ***Daredevil*** issues than any other artist is returning full-time to the Marvel Comics title in June.

Gene Colan, who penciled *Daredevil* on and off throughout the '60s and '70s, will replace current *Daredevil* artist **Cary Nord** as regular penciler with the May "Marvel Flashback Month" issue. *Daredevil* is one of Colan's first projects since his recent surgery for the eye disease glaucoma.

Colan, known for his moody pencils, will join new writer **Joe Kelly** and new editor Jaye Gardner on the book, a creative team that looks to add a slightly darker element to the overall tone of *Daredevil*. "We're trying to get a more *film-noir* feel and Gene's pencils definitely lend to that," said Gardner.

"Working on *Daredevil* brings back a lot of great memories," Colan said. "I feel at home here on *Daredevil*." ■ *MS*

'Bloodfire' Offers Condom Insert

***The Death of Bloodfire* #1**, a **Lightning Comics** offering to ship in May, comes in two editions: one standard ($3 cover) and one "AIDS Awareness Edition," shrinkwrapped with a condom and limited to 5,000 copies ($9.95). Whereas a $6.95 condom may not seem like a good value, 20% of net profits derived from the prophylactic edition will be donated to AmFar, the American Foundation for AIDS Research.

Bloodfire is the world's first HIV-positive superhero. But does he die in battle or from AIDS complications? "You'll have to read the book to find that out," said Lightning Vice-President **Steve Zyskowski**. "If we gave that away, we wouldn't raise any money." ■ *JM*

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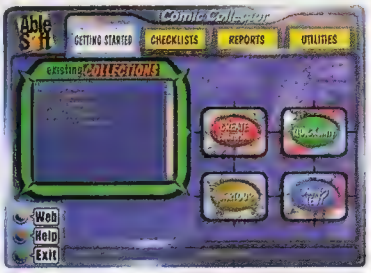

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(Formerly The Comic Collector '97)

Hitman Team Goes Unplugged

The hot ***Hitman*** team of **Garth Ennis** and **John McCrea** are going creator-owned, and the series' title might be a bit…jarring.

"The title, *Dicks*, is slang for 'detectives,' right? They do say that in America, right?" asked Ennis, native of Northern Ireland, who wants to make sure that people stateside understand what his new title is all about.

Published by **Caliber Comics**, *Dicks* is a four-issue mini-series beginning in April. "Basically, it's a fairly outrageous, completely over-the-top black comedy that has as much degeneracy as John and I can cram into four issues. It's the story of two friends, Dougie and Ivor, who are bad at everything. They figure they might as well be bad at something they enjoy, so they set out to be private detectives," said Ennis.

As hilarious, sadistic and over-the-top as *Dicks* may be, it actually has its roots in topics more serious. "Dougie and Ivor are supporting characters spun out of *Troubled Souls*, a serious Northern Ireland drama that was the first thing John and I worked on together. Fleetway, a British publisher, was going to publish *Dicks*, but the title they were going to do it in, *Crisis*, folded. It sat in limbo for a while, and John and I actually thought about self-publishing it," said Ennis.

But Caliber Comics picked it up when McCrea showed some pages to Caliber Editor Joe Pruett. "Caliber cut a deal with Fleetway, who owned the original copyrights," said Ennis. "I like the idea of publishing it at Caliber, where there are no rules. John and I can use whatever words we want, show whatever situation we want. We're only bounded by our conscience. In a situation like that, I don't think any other respectable publisher will take us. *Dicks* is going to be a wonderful force." ■ *JM*

This page: Writers Matt Wagner (lower left) and Steven T. Seagle create twisted tales and greusome villians for the Golden Age Sandman (opposite)

THEATER OF PAIN

BY SCOTT BRICK

MIXING COLD BRUTALITY WITH COMPLEX RELATIONSHIPS, *SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE* TAKES A REALISTIC LOOK AT SUPERHEROES IN THE 1930s

Be warned: There are no rippling muscles in *Sandman Mystery Theatre*.

No superpowers, either. No capes, spandex or buxom babes. The only costume? A three-piece suit and gas mask. This hero wears glasses, sports a gut and carries nothing more than a gun filled with sleeping gas. Hard to believe this is the same Golden Age Sandman who would later join up with Sandy, the Golden Boy as his sidekick and fight alongside the Spectre, Hawkman and Green Lantern in the JSA.

Loaded with violence, adult themes and foul (but historically accurate for the 1930s) language, *Sandman Mystery Theatre* began as an offshoot from another popular Vertigo title. In issue #1 of Neil Gaiman's critically acclaimed *Sandman*, Wesley Dodds was profoundly affected by the Dream King's imprisonment, so much so that he ventured forth by night, fighting crime and inspiring nightmares in his enemies as the Sandman. "My idea," says *Sandman Mystery Theatre* creator Matt Wagner, "was to take the original incarnation that [Neil] had hinted at in the very first issue and give us a modern re-dressing. Give it more adult themes and a more realistic approach."

And *Sandman Mystery Theatre* comes as close to reality as any superhero tale can hope to, primarily because it's firmly set in a time when there weren't costumed heroes on every corner. No mistaken identity slugfests here. What few heroes did exist in 1939 were just getting started; many hadn't even donned their first set of tights.

The villains are simpler as well, if not more gruesome: murderers, rapists, drug dealers and child molesters. The few evil doers who actually wear costumes do so purely for practical reasons. The Phantom of the World's Fair (issues #41-#44), an anonymous DC villain previously dressed in black tights and a red cape, was here reinterpreted as a leather-bound S & M nightmare, a self-loathing homosexual fiend who castrated himself and others, all for the love of his dead, sexually-abusive father.

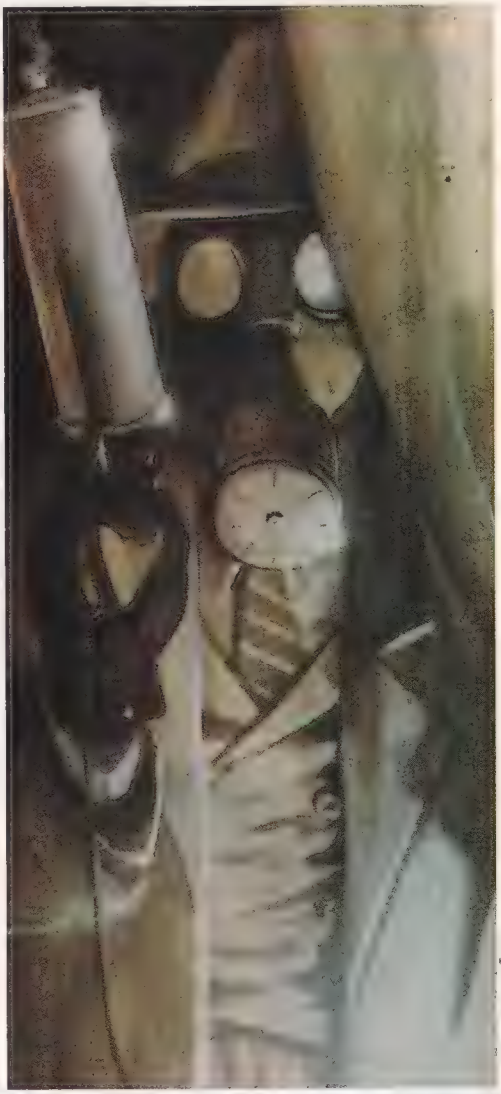
Certainly not your typical superhero stuff. Horrifying, yet far more real from a '90s perspective than a world where men can fly. "As real as you make the Flash" says co-writer Steven T. Seagle, "he can still run a million miles an hour, and your brain goes, 'That's not real.' But *Sandman Mystery Theatre* is about a guy using chemistry and a gas mask." Wagner adds, "The Hourman [issues #29-#32] has outrageous powers, but we portrayed it all in such a manner that it took place just off to the left of the screen. The characters all reacted like, 'Huh? Did I just see that?' The reality we set down is so non-fantastic. I think if Wesley saw superpowers in gear, it would sort of mess with his head."

THE MAJOR THEMES IN SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE have so far stemmed from hatred. "[Wesley's] not very aggressive, he sneaks around in the shadows," says Wagner. "That disguise is very insular, so I wanted to make the crimes he'd be dealing with very intimate. Close, personal crimes that dealt with hate and sex. Things you find in darkened bedrooms, not things you find in bank robberies."

Each four-issue story arc recreates the feel of a 1930s movie serial. After all, it's called *Sandman Mystery Theatre* for a reason. "I consciously play out things so that each page will basically be its own scene," says artist Guy Davis. "There's never—if I can help it—a scene change in the middle of a page. I figure turning a page is basically like a [camera] pan."

Using an exaggerated, evocative style, Davis completely reinvented everything from heroes to villains to locales in order to shatter overworked stereotypes. "Basically, I just wanted them to be the opposite of what they were originally supposed to look like. Wesley has a little bit of a gut, but that's what he's got the gun for. It makes things a little fairer. I haven't seen one millionaire today who looked like Bruce Wayne." Ironically, Davis' non-glitzy tone lends authenticity to the book. His New York isn't peopled by dashing couples waltzing around the Coconut Grove. These socialites tramp through Harlem gin-joints, smoking juju and listening to jazz.

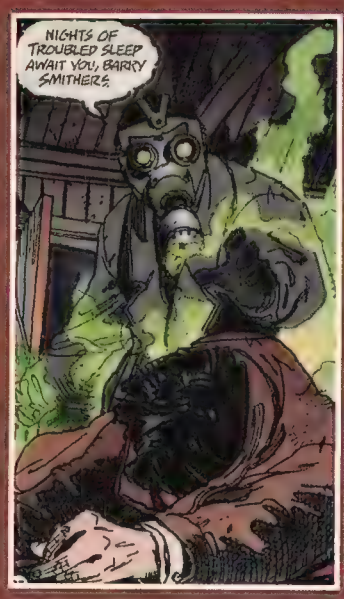
Life wasn't perfect in the Golden Age, as Seagle reminds us: "We're not trying to corrupt everything and give it a dark, seedy tone. We're saying these were dark,



"WE FOCUS ON BRUTAL SUBJECTS BECAUSE WE'RE PLAYING THAT AGAINST THE ONGOING ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN WESLEY AND DIAN." —STEVEN T. SEAGLE

Below: Wesley spooks Dian in his first adventure

SANDS OF TIME



Looks like Golden Age Sandman Wesley Dodds won't be getting much sleep in the next several months. Here's a quick look at what you can expect in the future from *Sandman Mystery Theatre*:

• **Issues #49-#52:** "The Return of the Scarlet Ghost." This latest four-part story arc, centering on a serial killer of pulp fiction authors, features a number of surprises. "We explain away the gold-and-purple costume and the existence of Sandy, the Golden Boy," says Wagner. The arc also has major consequences for Wesley and Dian, as well as an important sequence between Wesley and Morpheus in April's *SMT* #51. Their meeting throws new light on what connects these two Sandmen and promises to forever change their relationship, as well. "A lot of links will be made from past to present to future," says Seagle.

• **Issues #53-#56:** "The Crone." Who is the Crone, and why is she killing radio personalities? This arc examines the current dilemma, "Do Americans watch too much TV?" by setting it within the context of the Golden Age of radio broadcasting. Radio actors, writers and directors all perish, and the Sandman must find out why. "The Crone" also sports a special appearance by another pre-JSA hero, as Wesley and Dian must deal with the repercussions from issue #52's bombshell ending. Seagle promises "book-altering revelations."

• **Issues #57-#60:** "The Cannon." A character last seen in *Sandman Midnight Theatre*—the 1995 one-shot teaming writers Neil Gaiman and Matt Wagner, as well as the Golden Age Sandman and Morpheus—comes to the U.S. for an adventure with Wes and Dian. Illustrated by Michael Lark of *Terminal City*. ■ *SB*

seedy times, and the things you think happened, happened."

Despite showing the horrors of incest, rape, sexual torture and child abuse, the book's creators maintain that *SMT* is equally about love, specifically where one Dian Belmont is concerned. "For us, the book is mostly about the relationship between Wesley and Dian," says Seagle. "We focus on brutal subjects, because we're playing that against the ongoing romantic relationship between Wesley and Dian. It's two core, primal emotions that are in conflict."

JUST LIKE ANOTHER SHADOWY PULP HERO,

The Golden Age Sandman has operatives strategically placed around the city. District Attorney Belmont confides in his daughter Dian, unaware that his information is funneled straight to the Sandman. Coroner Hubert Klein (an unashamed fan of pulp magazines) clandestinely leaks autopsy results and the occasionally overheard All-Points-Bulletin to his erstwhile hero. Lastly, Lieutenant Burke, a guy whose language and racial intolerance can peel wallpaper, parts with information like it's his dying breath. At first obsessed with beating the Sandman senseless, Burke has become a reluctant informant. Being gassed six or eight times will do that to you.

Yet of all the supporting characters, none are as well-defined as Dian. This woman is adventurous, strong-willed and smart enough to figure out Wesley's superhero identity. Clearly, Dian is not the stereotypical superhero love-interest. Wesley's nocturnal wanderings make Dian frightened for his mental stability, and his penchant for speaking of himself in the third person while wearing his gas mask just plain creeps her out. Dian is real, as strong a female character as there is in comics today, and clearly Wagner's favorite. "I wanted to make Dian not just a sidekick," he says. "If you look at the storylines, anytime [Wesley's] without her, he doesn't function as well. He's come to really depend on their relationship quite a lot. When she discovers he's Sandman and breaks up with him for a while [in issue #24], we had the episode with the Butcher, which is just sheer brutality. It all descends into the sewer. Wesley literally falls into the toilet without her."

The relationship between Wes and Dian, always the focal point for *Sandman Mystery Theatre*, is also now part of the greater DC continuity. "Wes and Dian are kind of the first couple of comics," says Wagner. "They are distinctly and eternally linked in my mind. With their appearance in *Starman* [#20-#23], you know they really grow old together. And that's really fun to see." W

Scott Brick wrote this story in his sleep.

BLOOD SWEAT AND FEAR

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Frank Quitely

Peter Milligan
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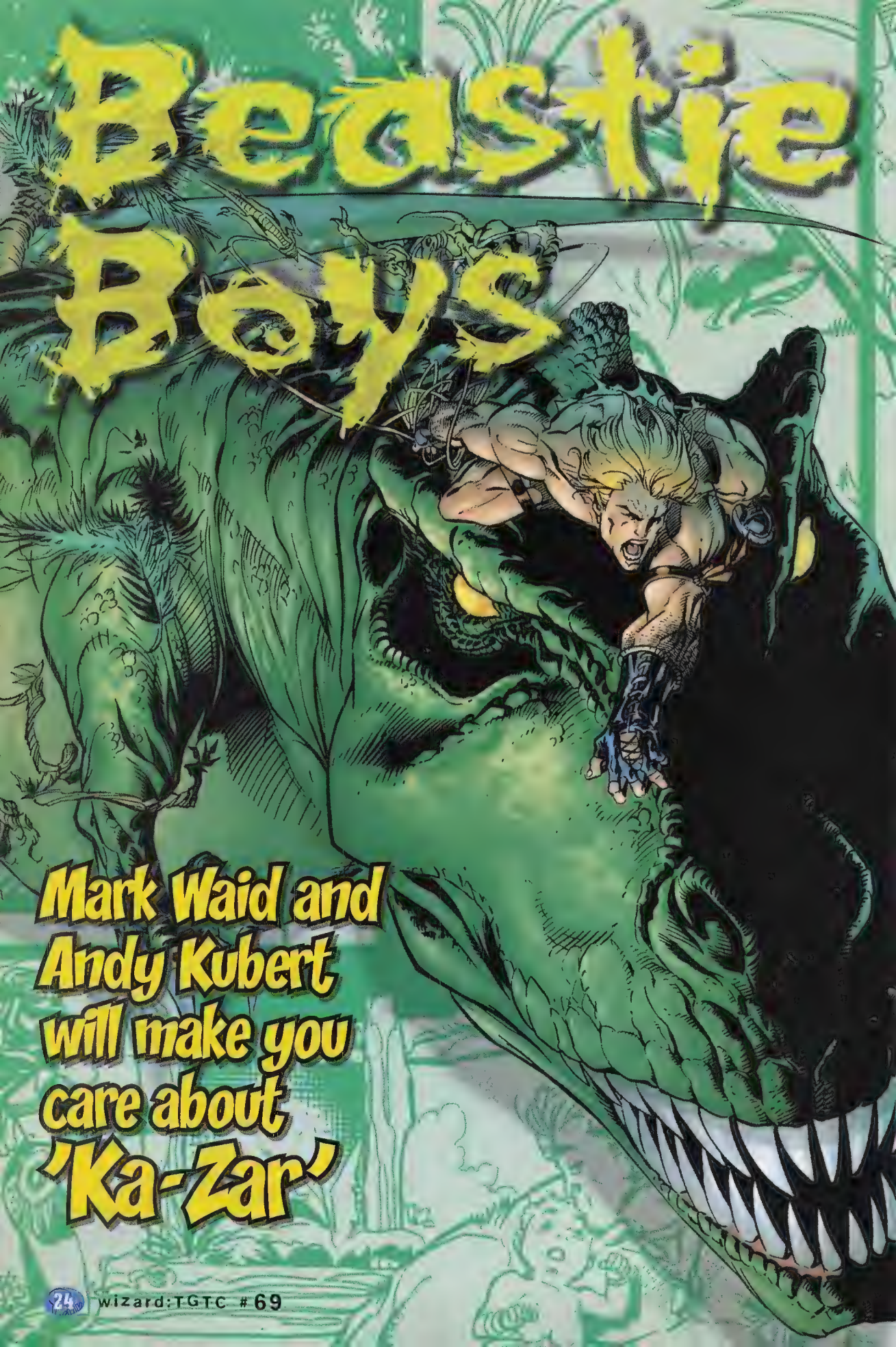

Beastie Boys
Mark Waid and Andy Kubert will make you care about 'Ka-Zar'

There Mark Waid was, on the phone with artist Andy Kubert, scanning through a list of Marvel characters. Kubert was ready to leave the X-Men after six years, looking for a new project and wanting to work with Waid.

They wanted something new, something fresh, something different. So Waid set about investigating the "available" pool of Marvel characters, seeing what the two could collaborate on.

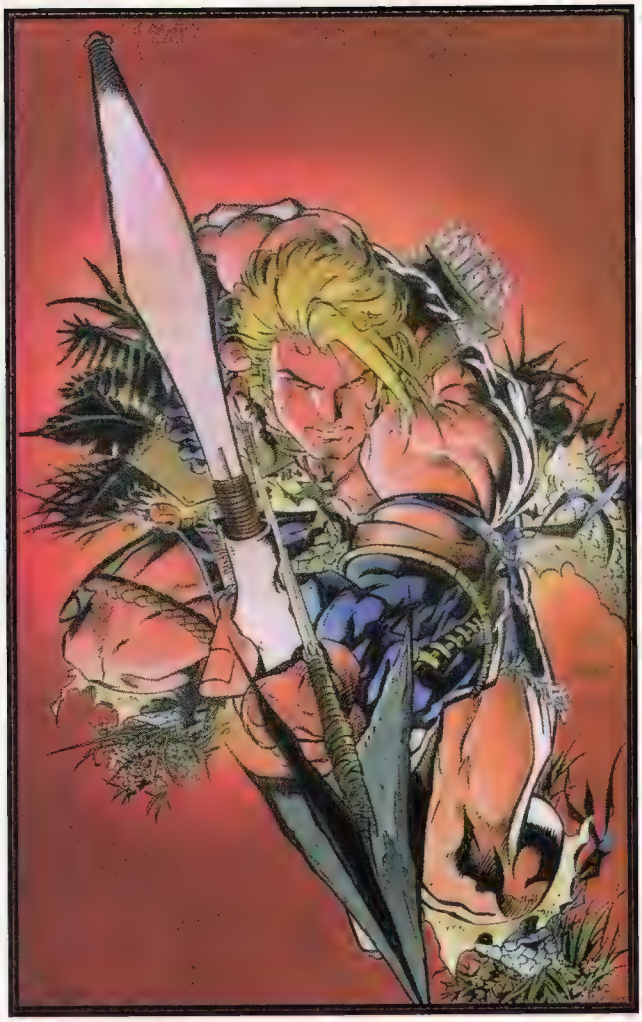
Iron Man? Nope, already committed to the "Heroes Reborn" project, along with the Fantastic Four, Avengers and Captain America. Daredevil? Sorry, spoken for. Ka-Zar? Well, yeah he was available, but...he was Ka-Zar. The savage guy with a knife. A cheap knockoff of Tarzan and Conan. Fans couldn't care less about Ka-Zar, let alone about his wife Shanna and his sidekick saber-toothed tiger Zabu.

But there he was, and in actuality, he was perfect. In this age of high-tech toys and flashy gizmos, Ka-Zar was the definitive throwback vehicle for Waid and Kubert. It had all the elements—nostalgia, simplicity and a plotline dealing with relationships, coming-of-age themes and fatherhood. Besides, Kubert grew up a major Ka-Zar fan.

And so began the roots of *Ka-Zar*, Marvel's new series beginning in March. There was just one problem...getting Waid out of his '90s-type mindset and into the world of Ka-Zar the Savage.

"I can't think of any character that embodies less any of the things that reflect my own life, as I sit here in front of my big 50-inch Mitsubishi [television] and my surround sound," admits Waid. "I'm really not much of a roughing-it kinda guy."

So obviously, Ka-Zar's a tough sell. Heck, even Kubert had to do his share of convincing before Waid felt comfortable with the character. After all, in today's power-hungry mutant mindset, a second-string supporting character with no superpowers, no flashy costume and three previous failed series, Ka-Zar's the last name on everybody's lips.



Is Ka-Zar (above) a hard sell? Not if Mark Waid (below) and Andy Kubert (bottom) can help it

But that's all about to change. Combine Waid, one of today's hottest writers, with Kubert, the former *X-Men* artist, and fans' ears will start perking up. Throw in a major push from Marvel and you'll find yourself hard-pressed to avoid this series.

"I read the first issue," says Marvel Editor-in-Chief Bob Harras, "and it's a lot of fun. It was exactly what everyone hoped it to be—a really fun read that grabbed you and said, 'Hey what's gonna happen to this guy's life next?' I'm real excited. I hope the fans go for it. I really, really do."

BUILDING THE PERFECT BEAST

But make no mistake, Ka-Zar is still...well, Ka-Zar. What could Waid, the writer credited with such high-profile superhero books as *Flash*, *X-Men* and *Captain America*, possibly do with a powerless character like Ka-Zar to make you care? Not much initially, which explains Waid's hesitancy with the book. But once the writer—known for his strong characterizations and supporting casts—discovered that the series was less about Ka-Zar and his jungle home the Savage Land and more about his relationship with his wife Shanna, everything started coming together. Ka-Zar wasn't so much Tarzan as he was the anti-Tarzan.

According to Waid, even though Ka-Zar—born Lord Kevin Plunder, a wealthy British nobleman—took residence in the Savage Land at an early age, he still remembers the pleasures of the modern world. "Ka-Zar's the one who was old enough when he was dropped into the Savage Land to remember Big Macs and 'The Brady Bunch' and FM stereo," says Waid. "Coming of age in the lawless jungle certainly adjusted his

BY ANDREW KARDON

perspective—he didn't have a whole lot of time to reminisce about FM stereo while fighting a triceratops to death. But there's still some sense of something missing in his life, and it hasn't been a problem until [he and Shanna] had their kid.

"Now that he and Shanna have a baby and he's cast in the role of father, he finds this strange longing in him for the things he had when he was a kid. For some reason, Shanna is getting more into the Jungle Goddess thing and he—more and more—is missing the fact that he can't get falafel from a street vendor. This is getting to be a real conflict and it's going to be a real problem between them."

So apparently there *is* some depth to Ka-Zar. He's not just, "Me, Ka-Zar. You, Zabu." But there's still no flashy costume. No flowing cape. Heck, the guy doesn't even wear a shirt half the time. He's Tarzan and Conan wrapped into one and thrown into a prehistoric jungle.

Enter Kubert, whose vivid pencils will most certainly pump some visual life into our hero. And Kubert learned from the jungle master himself, his dad Joe Kubert, who breathed visual excitement into the *Tarzan* comic books of the early '70s, with lush vegetation, ferocious beasts and spacious landscapes.

"I loved my dad's Tarzan stuff," he says. "That's why I liked Ka-Zar, because he was along those lines. He has no superpowers, he doesn't fly, he's got no telekinesis and he's not a big giant guy. So I gotta do a lot of body language. I've gotta make him real fluid, especially in the action scenes. I've gotta make it look like this guy can take care of himself, even against big gigantic guys. He'll have a '90s type of body—a real cut, trim body."

And then there's the hair. Long and scraggly, you could've ripped it off Conan, dyed it blonde, slapped it down on Ka-Zar and nobody would notice. That's why Harras wanted it changed. "Even though it sounds kinda simple, [updating the hair] was definitely a challenge because I wanted to do something that was '90s, and I wanted to do something that would give him movement and flow," says Kubert. "So, I looked through a lot of model magazines, and actually came across it by mistake. My sister-in-law works for a printing company in Manhattan and she sent me [some magazines]—I was looking for reference for suits and ties and stuff—and there was this guy who had this hairstyle that was Ka-Zar. When I saw it, I said that's him. So I tweaked it a bit. I gave him this big curl kind of thing in the front, so when he's fighting, it flies all over the place. That part I was very happy with."

THE PAST IS HISTORY

A new look and a modernized attitude are great, but remember, Ka-Zar's a character who's had three previous series that all ultimately failed. Is there really anything there, and is the fourth time the charm?

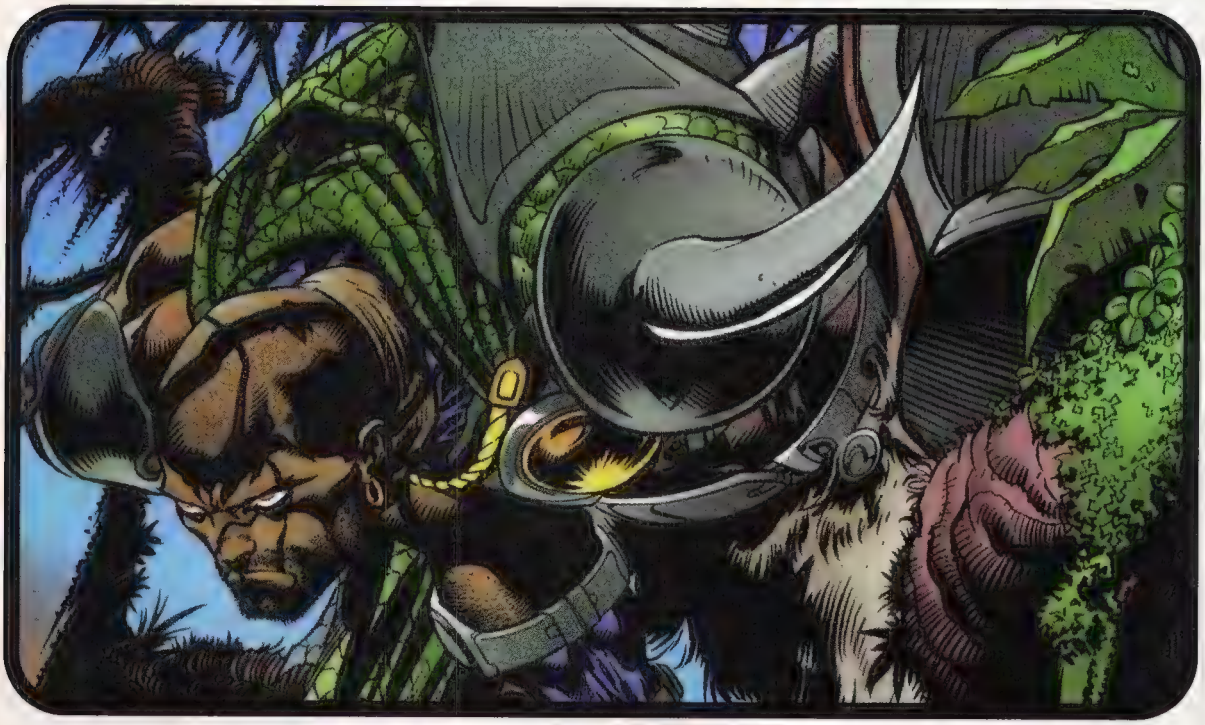
Marvel certainly thinks so, which is why the company's putting some pretty big muscle behind the series' launch. That's because Harras has a lot of faith in these two creators, something he hopes will carry over to the fans. "Andy and Mark both really wanted to do this project," he says, "and if those guys want to do something, I'm willing to go along for the ride. I've usually found that if the artist and writer are excited about something, that will translate into a book that the fans are excited about."

Besides spending some big-time bucks on advertising, Ka-Zar's been popping up in recent issues of *Sensational Spider-Man* and *The Incredible Hulk*. You can't buy better visibility than that. And don't think Harras sent out an edict demanding a certain number of Ka-Zar appearances before the relaunch. It's more like a wave of...desire, of all things. "People heard about Ka-Zar," he says. "He showed up in *Sensational* because I believe [series penciler] Mike Wieringo wanted to have his fun with dinosaurs and Ka-Zar as well. Adam [Kubert, Andy's brother] is drawing *Hulk* and he wanted to have fun with Ka-Zar too. It's one of those things where I think when people hear this character's on the road back, other creators want to join in on the fun. And it doesn't hurt that you get him back in the spotlight a little bit before you launch him."

RHINOS AND TIGERS AND DINOS, OH MY!

So the excitement's there. The exposure's there. But will fans ultimately take this new series seriously? After all, it co-stars a tiger named Zabu. Sounds more like a Disney flick or that green-skinned sissy cat from the old "He-Man" cartoon. He's not though. This one's a ferocious saber-toothed beast who's much more than just an animal sidekick. "He's like Captain America's shield, but he's smarter and he's got a tail," chuckles Waid. "He's as much an extension of Ka-Zar's right arm as Cap's

Below: Gregor, the man who trained Kraven the Hunter, has Ka-Zar in his sights
Opposite: Shanna (left) and Zabu the saber-toothed tiger round out Ka-Zar's supporting cast



shield is of his right arm. They just have such a rapport, Ka-Zar and Zabu."

Okay, then there's the villainous creatures. A jungle scene and a Tarzan-like hero? Gee, if we're lucky maybe Ka-Zar'll take on a rabid wombat or a ticked off gorilla. But wait, lest we forget, this is the strange Savage Land: home of the dinosaurs! "There will definitely be a lot of them," assures Kubert, whose love of "Jurassic Park" was a main influence for his drawings. "I wanted to do it because I wanted to do something completely different than I'd done before. You wouldn't believe the amount of dinosaur books I've got in here. It's hard to come up with technique and it's definitely a challenge, but it's a lot of fun."

As for more human villains, the duo clearly have some in mind. "All we know," says Waid, "is we want to use the Rhino. I want to use all those Spider-Man animal-named villains." Kubert enthusiastically agrees: "I want to put the Rhino in so badly. So bad, man. I just think it'd be fitting for him to be in there—it's the jungle and this giant cool character. I had a lot of fun doing the Juggernaut in *X-Men*, so it'd be a lot of fun to do the Rhino too."

Waid adds that he would like to see Ka-Zar interact more with Marvel's other heroes. After the first three-issue story arc in the Savage Land—where Ka-Zar goes up against Gregor, the man who trained Spidey baddie Kraven the Hunter—the book moves to New York City for three issues.

"A big part of the focus once he gets to New York, is what's Ka-Zar's life like in the city? Once he and Shanna are in New York, he enjoys playing this kind of Columbo role. He enjoys the notion that people think he's a stupid savage. So there's no end to the information he can pick up when he just keeps his ears open. And Shanna adores that about him. Shanna just thinks it's a hoot that he will play up the role of the incredibly wealthy savage in public. And when they get behind closed doors, they'll just laugh their asses off about what he was doing in public. 'Ha, you ate the lobster with your bare hands, that was really great. Next time, swing from the chandelier. I dare ya!' "

So looks are deceiving. On the surface, Ka-Zar still looks like that same ol' Grade-B supporting character. But underneath, he's got all the ingredients for a big hit: one part hot writer, another part hot artist, two parts guest appearances and four parts strong publisher push. We can only hope *Ka-Zar*'s chefs cook the mix just right.

Assistant Editor Andrew Kardon has a hard time believing that Ka-Zar really likes falafel. Hummus, maybe. But falafel?

Ka-Who?

Fueled by the hype of the upcoming dino-filled "Jurassic Park" sequel "The Lost Word," comic creators pitched Marvel their ideas on relaunching Ka-Zar, the Savage Land's dino-hunter supreme.
What follows are excerpts from rejected relaunch-proposals. Oh, and all names have been withheld to protect the innocent.

- "...Ka-Zar's head is bitten off by a giant prehistoric piranha and his head is replaced with a giant harpoon! And...he can control fish!"

- "...Ka-Zar is felled in battle with Doommonkey, an unstoppable engine of mindless monkey destruction, but is resurrected as four different Ka-Zars! They'll be Ka-Boy, Ka-Borg, Ka-Zardicator and...uh, Steel."

- "...We get alla them old *Ka-Zar* comics from the '80s, edit Zabu's hairy ass outta there and digitize in Jabba the Hutt!"

- "...Li'l Ka-Zar and the Savage Babies!"

- "...A caveman hopped-up on cocoa leaves freaks out and breaks Ka-Zar's back, forcing Zabu to don the loincloth and become the Savage Land's feline flatfoot of fury!"

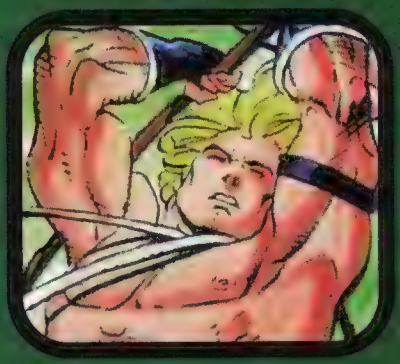
- "...Kevin Plunder XIV, last of a long line of Plunders, dons the mantle of Ka-Zar to protect the Savage Land from pirates and poachers as the savage that walks erect!"

- "...Ka-Zar: The Next Generation!"

- "...Two really big rocks fall on Ka-Zar and Zabu, causing a bizarre accident where their brains are switched! Now Ka-Zar is Zabu, Zabu is Ka-Zar and *everything's* mixed up!"

- "...Ka-Zar gets beaten with a pipe and blown up, forcing Zabu to get a new partner. The twist? Instead of a loincloth, the new Ka-Zar has long pants!"

- "...Remember the Ka-Zar clone back from the '70s? Well, as it turns out..." ■ *The* Wizard *Staff*



Wizard casts the Witchblade movie!

Casting Call

By a bunch of *Wizard* staffers

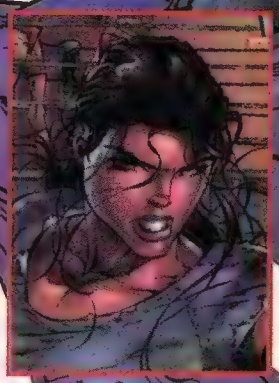
All photos by the Everett Collection.

Think a Witchblade movie has what it takes? Let's list the ingredients: We've got our protagonist Sara Pezzini, a gorgeous überbabe NYPD cop who likes to wear skimpy outfits and has a mystically powerful gauntlet at her command. We've got our bad guy Kenneth Irons, who's not just bad, but downright evil to the core. Throw in a superhuman bodyguard like Ian Nottingham, along with a bunch of cops trying to figure out what the hell is going on, and you've got the makings of a great flick. If Hollywood was smart, they'd get this cranked out soon. But if you want to find out who *Wizard* would pick for the starring roles, read on...

Outline © Frank W. Ockenfels

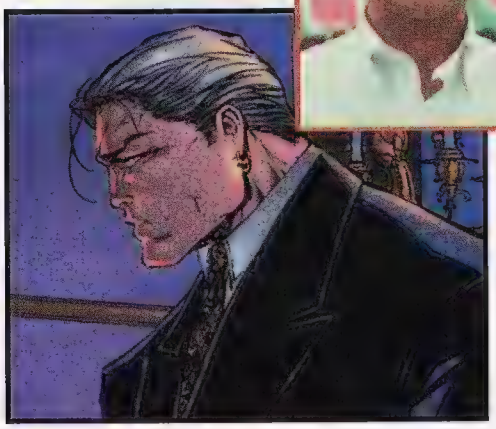
WITCHBLADE

We needed someone with an outstanding body and stunning eyes to play Detective Sara Pezzini. We couldn't think of anyone better than Yasmine Bleeth ("Baywatch").



KENNETH IRONS

For the role of Kenneth Irons, a totally evil kinda guy, we chose Michael Douglas. He's definitely shown in roles like "The Ghost and the Darkness" and "Wall Street" that he can easily throw on that icy look.

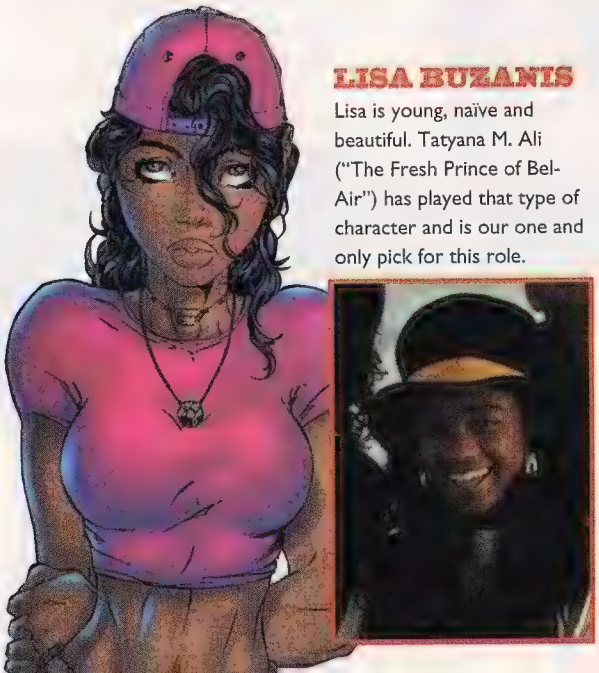


IAN NOTTINGHAM

For Ian Nottingham, we wanted someone with great acrobatic skills who would look ultra-cool wielding a sword. Phillip Rhee did all that stuff in "Best of the Best," so he's our man.

JAKE McCARTHY

David Chokachi ("Baywatch") wouldn't have any problems playing Jake. Besides looking identical, they both have the good-guy, older-brother quality about them.



LISA BUZANIS

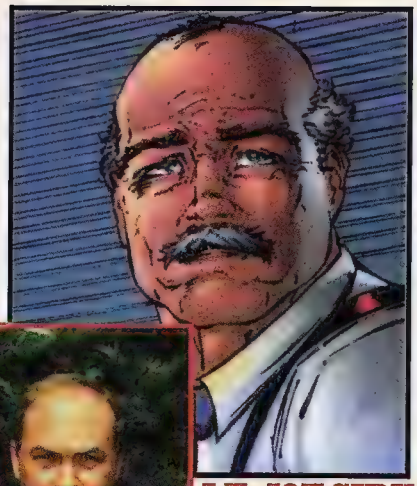
Lisa is young, naïve and beautiful. Tatyana M. Ali ("The Fresh Prince of Bel-Air") has played that type of character and is our one and only pick for this role.

JULIE PEZZINI

Sara's sister Julie has a body that won't quit, so we needed another babe. Nikki Cox ("Unhappily Ever After") is perfect for her.

BRUCE WILDER

For the role of Bruce Wilder, the man who can get any information for a price, we chose Ian Ziering ("Beverly Hills, 90210"). Besides looking exactly like him, he knows how to play that type of slick character.



LT. JOE SIRY

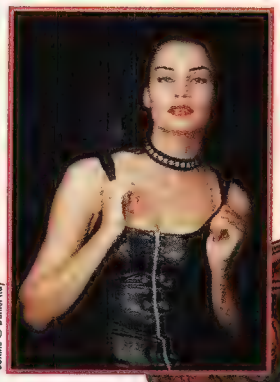
Lt. Joe is a stereotypical cop: grouchy and tough as nails, but with a heart of gold. John Ashton ("Beverly Hills Cop") has exactly what we're looking for.

SELZER

In almost every role he's played, Joe Pantoliano ("The Fugitive") has been a weaselly kinda guy. That's why we chose him for the role of Selzer, the slimy cop.

MICHAEL YEE

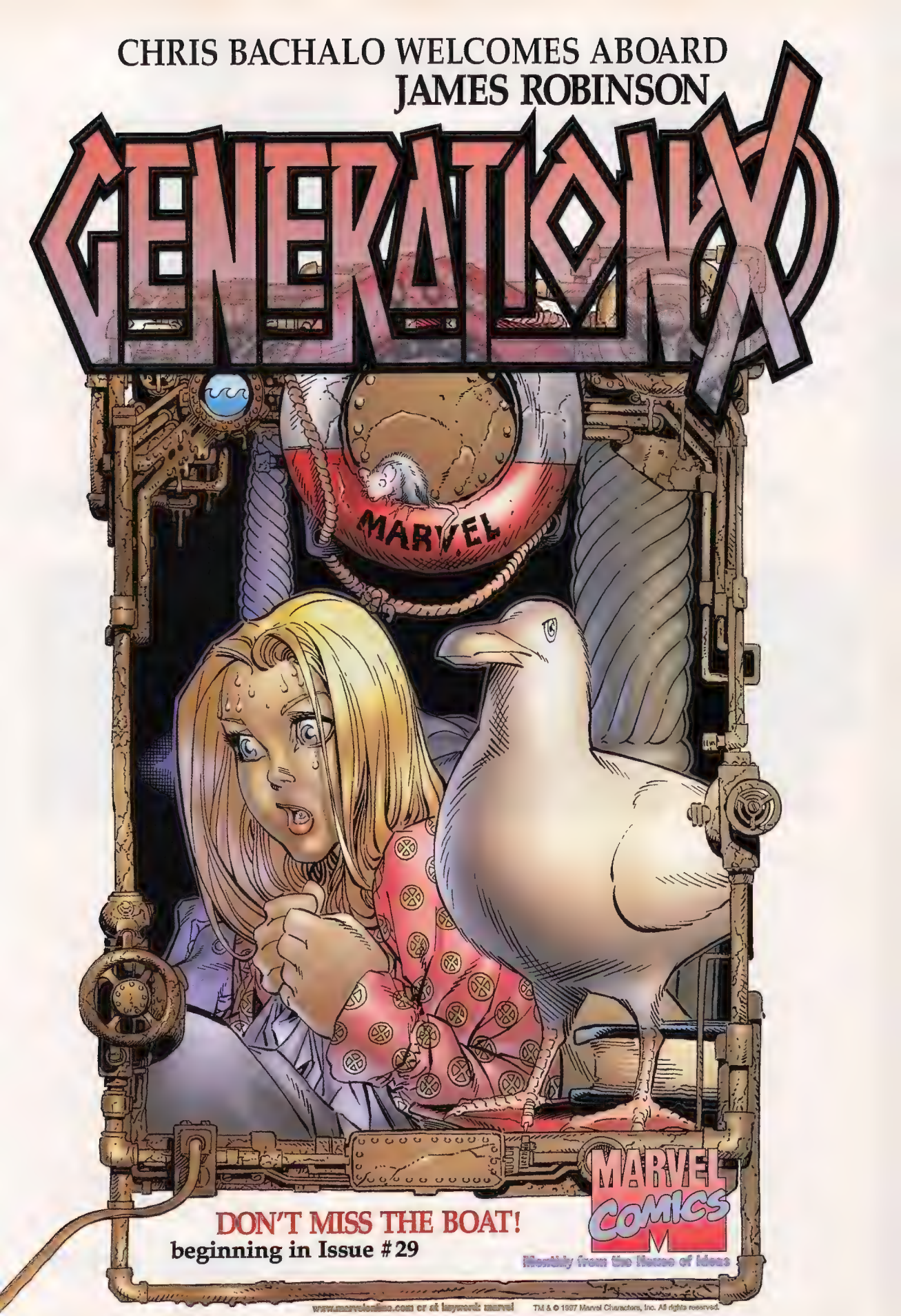
We couldn't pick a better man for the short-lived role of Sara's partner, Michael Yee. Robin Shou ("Mortal Kombat") looks like his twin.



MS. BOUCHER

The sly Ms. Boucher is conniving and deceitful, but beautiful enough that you don't care. Famke Janssen—as evidenced by her delightfully villainous turn in "Goldeneye"—could easily slip into this role. W

Outline © Daniel Roy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MARVEL AND DC COMBINE THEIR UNIVERSES ONCE AGAIN FOR AMALGAM COMICS, PART 2

ONE MORE TIME

Amalgam Publisher M.M. Carwald is back. And the fictional head honcho has brought a dozen new comics with him, even goofier than last year's!

"We left ourselves plenty of elbow room last time to do more wacky stuff," says Marvel Comics editor Tom Brevoort, who's editing three of the scheduled 12 Amalgam Comics one-shot issues. "We saw we had a chance to have some fun again."

DC Executive Editor Mike Carlin agrees: "It would have been foolish not to go back to that well. Everyone had a ball with them last year: The editors, writers and artists had a ball doing them, the comic shops had a ball dealing with them, and the readers had a ball reading them."

And so, the week of April 1, Amalgam (uh-mal'-gum) Comics once again shoves aside all those namby-pamby titles in the DC and Marvel Universes and unleashes a dozen titles that seem familiar and yet just quite…aren't. Each publisher will present six one-shot issues (there will be no #2 issues continuing from last year's Amalgam books) that take elements from both company's characters and combine them in hilarious and entertaining ways. No other superhero-related titles will appear that week from either publisher.

The comics follow last February's first dozen Amalgam comics, which broke out from the Marvel/DC four-issue crossover series. Many of the same amalgams will be used, but they'll appear in new titles and with additional characters. Readers also will visit the Amalgam Universe's version of the Wild West, World War II and many, many future periods.

"We decided to keep the same amalgams because we don't have a framing device as we did last year [with the *Marvel Versus DC* mini-series]," says Carlin. Adds Brevoort, "We wanted to keep the ground rules in place rather than veer off wildly." The concept revolves around a character called Access, who helped separate the universes last year in Marvel versus DC and recently in the four-part sequel mini-series, *All Access*. Explains Brevoort, "The components for that universe are up on the shelf, and we can enter that world whenever we want."

But weren't we promised last year that Amalgam was a once-in-a-lifetime, never-to-be-repeated event? "We're sorry these comics actually made money," Carlin says, in that tone he uses with reporters who ask really stupid questions. "Nobody will ever believe us, but we really didn't plan this. There honestly is no other reason to do this except to have fun again. The behind-the-scenes logistics of approvals and coordination is a real pain. Both companies could put out six comics that week that sell as many copies as these will. But would they be as much fun? Probably not."

Brevoort agrees. "They were successful, and we like giving fans what they want. It was a chance to have fun again." Here's how they intend to do it:

BY CRAIG SHUTT

SUPER-SOLDIER: MAN OF WAR #1 (above)

Characters Merged: CAPTAIN AMERICA, SUPERMAN, SGT. FURY, SGT. ROCK.
Writers: DAVE GIBBONS & MARK WAID
Artists: DAVE GIBBONS & JIMMY PALMIOTTI
Publisher: DC

Following up last year's popular Super-Soldier, this title reveals the beginnings of the shield-slinger with powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men. In the days of World War II, he teams with Sgt. Rock & His Howling Commandos.

"Captain America is a primal figure," says Gibbons. "He has to be set in World War II. It's really great to get to work with Sgt. Rock and Sgt. Fury, and draw Nazis, ships and tanks. I did everything I could to make it authentic."

The story, Waid says, has Super-Soldier and his sidekick, Jimmy Olsen, tracking a Nazi super-secret device being shipped to Germany by their arch-foe, Major Zemo. "Hi-jinks ensue," he sums up. "It's a full-out romp. It's Dave's attempt to capture the incredible energy of a Kirby war comic."

We'll also get to see Waid's favorite creation, the amalgamation of Easy Co.'s Ice Cream Soldier and Howling Commando Izzy Cohen: Ice Cream Cohen. "I'm so proud of that I can't see straight," says Waid.

SPIDER-BOY TEAM-UP #1 (above right)

Characters Merged: SPIDER-MAN, SUPERBOY, GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY, LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES
Writers: KARL KESEL & ROGER STERN
Artist: JOSE LADRONN
Publisher: MARVEL

"This is going to be a fast-paced story crammed with tons of amalgams," says Karl Kesel, writer of last year's popular *Spider-Boy* issue and one of the acknowledged champs of bad amalgamated puns. "It's gonna be a lot of fun."

This time, our hero teams up to confront a major menace. And it's got to be a major menace, because Spider-Boy needs not only the entire Legion of Galactic Guardians 2099 to deal with it, but several versions of the team from throughout time! "Not only will you see the Amalgam version of Electro and Lightning Lad," Kesel says, "you'll get to see all the different costumes he's worn."

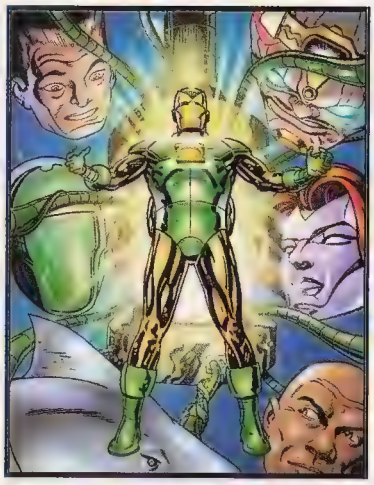
Pencils are being handled by superhero newcomer Jose Ladronn, who Kesel describes as doing "astounding stuff. It's a weird mix, because his figures look like [Jack] Kirby, but his background are filled with detail like a lot of European work. And his sense of design is wonderful. We threw more than 50 characters at him and they look great."

DARK CLAW ADVENTURES #1 (at right)

Characters Merged: ANIMATED BATMAN AND WOLVERINE
Writer: TY TEMPLETON
Artists: TY TEMPLETON & RICK BURCHETT
Publisher: DC

Apparently hot on the heels of a "Dark Claw" animated show comes *Dark Claw Adventures*, picking up the same style as the other comics inspired by cartoons. "It's really a funny book," says editor Scott Peterson. "It's got a lot of the trademarks of the *Adventures* books—humor, pathos, the whole gamut. It's really cool to see the animated Batman talking like Wolverine."

Joining Dark Claw will be everybody's favorite sidekick, Sparrow. They'll match wits against the Claw's greatest enemy: Ra's A-Pocalypse. "Or is it?" Peterson asks. "Maybe it's actually Ra's daughter, Lady Talia, the only woman Dark Claw has ever loved." As if that conundrum isn't enough, our heroes also must face Omega Beast and perhaps the most dangerous foe of all, Spiral Harley!



IRON LANTERN #1 (above)

Characters Merged: IRON MAN AND GREEN LANTERN
Writer: KURT BUSIEK
Artists: PAUL SMITH & AL WILLIAMSON
Publisher: MARVEL

Stark Aircraft President Hal Stark was testing an airplane cockpit simulator one day when it suddenly was pulled to the aid of a crashed alien, Ronan Sur. But before Stark could arrive, Sur died, and the trainer crashed. Badly injured, Stark used the alien's weird power battery to create a suit of life-sustaining armor and became...The Iron Lantern!

"As soon as I heard about the Amalgam comics last year, this is the one I wanted to do," says writer Kurt Busiek. Our story opens with Iron Lantern imprisoning a defeated villain on Oa, the Living Planet. But before IL can rest, his ace test pilot, the fiery-haired and fiery-tempered Pepper Ferris, discovers a gem that transforms her into Madame Sapphire! And she goes and wakes up Great White! And waiting in the rings, er, we mean wings, is Mandarinestro! "He's so cool," Busiek notes. And Smith's art ain't bad, either, he adds. "The pages are looking *fantabulacious*! It's really sweet stuff."

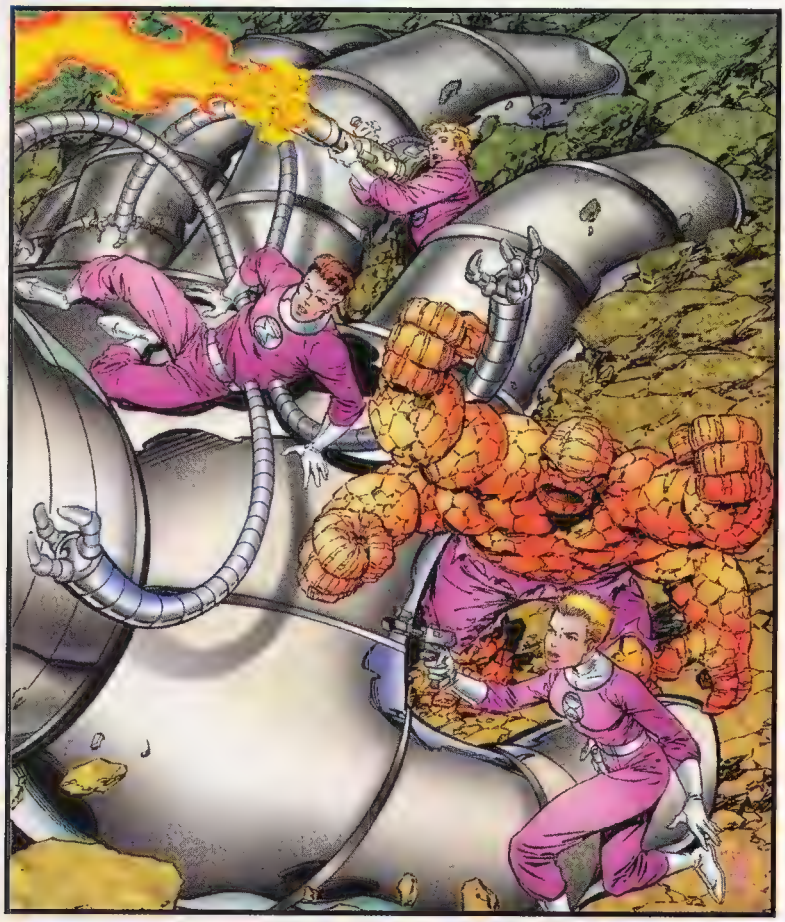
CHALLENGERS OF THE FANTASTIC #1 (below left)

Characters Merged: FANTASTIC FOUR AND THE CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN
Writer: KARL KESEL
Artists: TOM GRUMMETT & AL VEY
Publisher: MARVEL

"Tom Grummett and I had a ball doing this one," says writer Karl Kesel. "We're both huge Fantastic Four fans, and we decided this might be as close as we're going to get. And if we have only one shot at the FF, we had to do Galactus."

He means Galactiac, a brilliant, robotic consumer of worlds. He runs up against the Challengers: Cadmus Project Director Reed "Prof" Richards, S.H.I.E.L.D. Agent Sue "Ace" Storm, Senator Benjamin "Rocky" Grimm, and adventurer Johnny "Red" Storm. But not only do the Fantasti-Challs have to battle this dreadful menace, they also face the Silver Racer, the Asgodian avatar of death! "Yes," Kesel sighs, "I'm afraid that means someone is going to die."

Before that happens, the Challs tangle with Ultivac the Multi-Robot and Diabolo the Volcano Man! We'll also learn more about that mysterious evil DNA injected into Richards during last year's *Spider-Boy* title. "Oh no!" Kesel exclaims, horrified. "We're already cleaning up continuity!"



LOBO THE DUCK #1 (below)

Characters Merged: LOBO AND HOWARD THE DUCK
Writer: ALAN GRANT
Artists: VAL SEMEIKS & RAY KRYSSING
Publisher: DC

"This story plunges you right into the thick of it," says Alan Grant. Typically, the fourth part of a six-part epic battle has a tendency to do that. Continued from god knows where, the adventure opens with Manhattan totally destroyed and all the Amalgam heroes dead except for Lobo the Duck. "And boy," says Grant, "is he pissed."

Lobo and his main squeeze, Bevarlene, also must take on the evil Dr. Bong-Face, but their biggest challenge comes from Howard the Duck's old foe, the Kidney Lady. "I've elevated her to the status of universe-conquering tyrant," Grant explains. "She's the ultimate enemy of Lobo the Duck." He was busy dialoguing the first dozen pages when we got hold of him across the pond, and he was pumped up. "This is some of Val Semeiks best work. It's exemplary stuff."

So is there any hope? Can Lobo the Duck defy the forces of evil and resurrect the other heroes? "I don't know," Grant laughs. "I'll never have to write the end, will I? This is going to be just a kick-ass book. What else would it be with Howard the Duck and Lobo together?"

EXCITING X-PATROL #1 (at right)

Characters Merged: X-MEN AND DOOM PATROL
Writer: BARBARA KESEL
Artist: BRYAN HITCH
Publisher: MARVEL

Brother Brood, a charismatic cult leader, has been infested with a Brood queen and now wants to take over the world using mutants as his slave army. To stop him and save the kidnapped Terra-X, Shatterstarfire leads her team into battle. But Niles Cable, now wheelchair-bound, is captured and taken to the Brood pit, where he must be saved by the X-Patrol and Jericho, a walking man-mountain of stone!

"They're going to show off their powers, kick butts, and take names," says writer Barbara Kesel, whose book follows last year's adjectiveless X-Patrol. Also returning are the other team members: Elasti-Girl, Beastling, Ferro-Man, and Dial H for Husk. "I'm trying to see how many amalgams I can fit in," Kesel admits. Among them are (brace yourself) the Sea Devil Dinosaurs and Prez, Master of Kung Fu.

Can it get any worse? Oh yeah. "I'm not telling anyone the best one, which is the first character Husk turns into," she says. "I'm quite proud of it. But you've got to get the book to see it."

JLX UNLEASHED #1 (below)

Characters Merged: ODD DC GUYS, X-CHARACTERS
Writer: CHRISTOPHER PRIEST
Artists: OSCAR JIMENEZ & ANIBAL RODRIGUEZ
Publisher: DC

This title picks up after a long run of *JLX*, which culminated with a storyline called "The Armageddon Agenda," explains editor Ruben Diaz. In it, many renegade mutants, including most of the JLX team, were captured and contained, including Aquamariner, Runaway, Angelhawk, Spitfire, Apollo and Nightcreeper.

But now the Hellfire League of Injustice has unleashed Fin Fang Flame (Fin Fang Foom and Brimstone) to eradicate the mutants not destroyed by the Armageddon Agenda. Earth's heroes realize they don't have the muscle to stop the League. So they unleash...the JLX! Amazon of the Judgment League Avengers agrees to lead the team.

"But things won't go smoothly," Diaz promises. A key reason: Mr. X knows the truth about Amazon actually being a mutant masquerading as a woman given powers by the gods. (Got that?) Meanwhile, Apollo (Ray and Cyclops) and Chaos (Havoc and Spitfire) face resentments that may turn brother against brother! "The art is just now coming in," Diaz reports. "And it looks gorgeous."

GENERATION HEX #1 (right)

Characters Merged: GENERATION X, JONAH HEX, BAT LASH AND OTHER MARVEL/DC WESTERN CHARACTERS
Writer: PETER MILLIGAN
Artists: ADAM POLLINA & MARK MORALES
Publisher: DC

The Wild West town of Humanity has a dark secret. The Hexes tried to raise their family there, but were driven out in the most fearful fashion. It wasn't a wise move. "Jono Hex grew up fast and he grew up mean," says writer Peter Milligan. "And now he's back to give the town its comeuppance." Standing in his way is Marshall Bat Trask.

But Jono's got help from a gang of meta-mutant outlaws. They include Skinhunter (Scalphunter and Skin), the Whip Queen (combine Emma Frost with Whip and say it five times fast), Retribution (Firehair and Penance), and Random Thunder, "a young kid who provokes claps of thunder with his adolescent mood swings," Milligan laughs. "You know how it was." You bet.

MAGNETIC MEN FEATURING MAGNETO #1 (above)

Characters Merged: MAGNETO AND THE METAL MEN
Writer: TOM PEYER
Artists: BARRY KITSON & DAN PANOSIAN
Publisher: MARVEL

Last year's Magneto And the Magnetic Men was cool, but now...meet the startling new Magnetic Men!

"It's the same characters," says writer Tom Peyer. "But Barry Kitson has redesigned them with new bodies, and they look terrific. He's really buried himself in it, and he can tell a story like crazy. This book is just chock full of new amalgams."

It opens with Magneto giving the Magnetic Men human identities after a triumphant but destructive battle. "This will bring us no fans at all," Peyer laughs, "but we actually use the names the Metal Men were given in 1969. There's also lots of violence in the book, which we hope readers will like. They always seem to."

The violence stems from the team meeting Mr. Mastermind, "a wormy guy who creates illusions." They also tangle with Quasimodox, the villainous Sinister Society, Koltron ("an adamantium robot with a bunch of goony cult followers"), Chemodam and, um, Krakoa, the Living Dinosaur Island. "I'm hoping to set a record for making people groan," says Peyer.

BAT-THING #1 (below left)

Characters Merged: MAN-BAT AND MAN-THING
Writer: LARRY HAMA
Artists: RODOLFO DAMAGGIO & BILL SIENKIEWICZ
Publisher: DC

"Don't forget to mention that I wrote *Dark Claw*, the best-selling issue from last year," mentions writer Larry Hama. "I never see that in print anywhere." Gotcha. Now that credit's been given where it's due, what's the deal with Bat-Thing? "It's Man-Thing with wings," he sums up. "It's two genetic weirdos who have been altered by science, and those who know fear burn at the Bat-Thing's touch."

The story is a complicated tale of death and hot fear involving a race against time among Bat-Thing, the police and the bad guys, who are trying to murder Bat-Thing's wife and family while Bat-Thing seeks revenge on those responsible for his existence. "It's hard to boil this one down, but there's lots of violence," Hama says unnecessarily, considering who we're talking to. "It's got a film noir, rainy-night, moody feel to it. It's a dark mystery that should be fun." Did we mention that Hama's *Dark Claw* was the best-selling Amalgam comic last year?

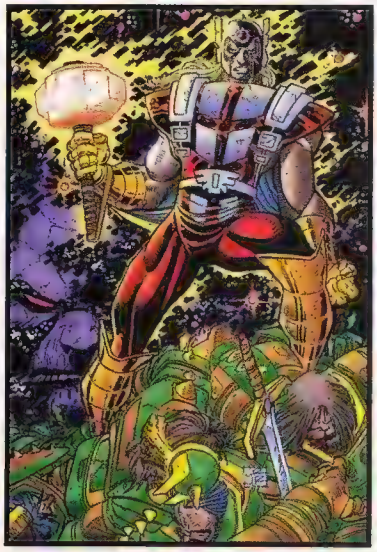
THORION OF THE NEW ASGODS #1 (above right)

Characters Merged: THOR AND THE NEW GODS
Writer: KEITH GIFFEN
Artist: JOHN ROMITA JR.
Publisher: MARVEL

With Thanoseid on the loose, it was only a matter of time before he met Thorion and the rest of the New Asgodians. "There came a time when the old gods... changed!" says writer Keith Giffen, paraphrasing the Jack Kirby-written line from *New Gods* #1. "I'm starting with Ragnarok [the end of the universe] and working my way from there."

The story concerns the pact Odin the Highfather makes with the Source to save the universe. His other son, L'ok D'saad, isn't happy with the deal. As a result, he talks Thanoseid into giving him the Mother Cube to end the world. It's up to Thorion, Bald'r (also called Lightbringer) and the other New Asgodians to stop him.

"I wanted to use all the stuff I remembered from Kirby," Giffen says. "I was concerned, because we needed an artist who could match that scope, and I was thrilled when I heard J.R. Jr. was doing it. It fulfills another of my great comic book ambitions."



WHAT COMES NEXT?

Another four-issue *Access* series is slated by Marvel for the fourth quarter of the year, and DC will follow with another in 1998 if interest is still there. Can we also expect to see the Amalgam Universe back?

"I'd hesitate to say this will be a regular event," Brevoort says. "In some ways, I hate to see it lose its 'specialness' that way. Last year it surprised people. This year they're looking forward to it. By next year, maybe the joke will be tired."

If Amalgam does return, it may be with things shaken up, Carlin suggests. "I think it might get restrictive and difficult to keep this universe straight. We've already made a couple mistakes."

Some of the creators, such as Karl Kesel, agree. "We need to keep things new and fresh," he says. "I think it would be more fun to wipe the slate clean."

Even if the Amalgam Universe is never seen again, adds Kurt Busiek, its spirit can live on. "Instead of making readers look forward to next year's week of cool comics, why don't we try to get the regular books to be this much fun? What's cool about the Amalgam comics is that they're fresh, clever, exciting and unpredictable. We should be able to do that with the regular characters without having to stick them into amalgams."

Craig Shutt, who also questioned Alex Ross this month, was hoping he'd see how Archie Kent keeps his secret identity safe from Betty Lang and Veronica Lane with the help of his pal Jughead Olsen. But that's a different publisher.

UNITED WE GALL

YEAH, THEM DC/MARVEL AMALGAMS ARE PRETTY SPIFFY. BUT HOW COOL WOULD AMALGAMS BE IF YOU COULD COMBINE HEROES AND VILLAINS FROM ALL THE COMIC BOOK UNIVERSES? LET'S SEE...

10 DC's pliable hero **Elongated Man** intermixes with longtime Spidey foe the **Lizard** to form the ultimate dispenser of justice and snaker of sinks...**Elongator**!

9 **Wonder Woman** merges with **Commander Adama** (the dog food-hawking leader of "Battlestar Galactica") to form the space-faring children's variety show of justice...**Wonderama**!

8 Disfigured *Preacher* supporting cast member **Arseface** becomes one with a **Dreadnaught**, one of them dime-a-dozen robotic Iron Man villains, to create something that absolutely-will-not-stop-EVER-until-you-are-nauseous...**Arsenaught**!

7 In a special all-Marvel amalgam, ferocious dragon **Fin Fang Foom** fuses with the energy-blastin' mutant outlaw **Boom-Boom** to combat evil and step on Japanese people as...**Fin Fang Boom-Boom**!

6 In yet another single-company Amalgam, we pull **Captain Cold** outta the Flash's rogue's gallery and slap him together with long-time (ba-da-bump) Legion villain the **Time Trapper** and come up with a villain who will prove plumbers are a cowardly and superstitious lot...**Captain Crapper**!

5 Wild West Image heroine **Wynonna Earp** fuses with the demonic **Ghost Rider** to be condemned to Colonial-age typecast hell as...**Wynonna Ryder**!

4 **M.O.D.O.K.**, Marvel's Mental Organism Designed Only for Killing gets real friendly with **O.M.A.C.**, DC's One Man Army Corps to create **M.O.M.A.C.**: the Man On a Mission Against Cookies!

3 **Impulse** unites with totally useless Marvel baddie the **Plant Man** to form the Bad Girl craze-ending...**Implant Man**!

2 In our only three-way combo, we stir together crappy '70s Marvel heroine **Ms. Marvel**, the X-Men's **Psylocke** with New Teen Titans villain **Trigon** to create a sure-fire Broadway hit...**Ms. Psygon**!

1 What do you get when you combine Incredible Hulk villains the **U-Foes** with Superman arch-enemy **Conduit**? Well, brush up on your Arnold Schwarzenegger impression as you come face to face with...**U-Con-Du-It**!

■ *The Wizard Staff*

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'Dream' 'Teams'

By the Wizard Staff

'WIZARD' PICKS THE ULTIMATE CREATIVE COMBOS FOR MARVEL'S CORE COMIC TITLES

TODD McFarlane drawing Spidey again. Jim Lee back on *X-Men*. Frank Miller's return to *Daredevil*. Don't hold your breath.

See, a couple of months ago in *Wizard*'s letters column (*Wizard* #61), a hot topic of conversation was born: Marvel comic book dream teams (ignited, in part, by Marvel's farming-out of *Iron Man*, *Captain America*, *Avengers* and *Fantastic Four*). Fans flooded our offices with thousands of letters with who would be the "dream creative team" on their favorite books, most of which featured the nigh-impossibilities of the three examples above. McFarlane on Spidey? Sorry, he's busy building *Spawn* into a multi-million dollar property. Jim Lee? Uh-uh, he's juggling a handful of hot creator-owned projects and an entire art studio. And Frank Miller? The only way we see him walking back into Marvel is with dynamite taped to his chest.

Needless to say, most of the "dream teams" were just that—dreams. So, when we decided to answer the question that almost all the letters asked ("Who are *Wizard*'s dream teams?"), out were unlikely candidates like McFarlane, Lee and Miller, who we knew were just pipe dreams. We went with creators who were at least inside the realm of possibility.

Sooo...with no offense intended to Marvel's current creative teams, here's our best crack at the so-called "dream teams" for the core Marvel Universe...

THE AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

WRITER: Roger Stern
ARTIST: Brett Booth
WHY STERN: Stern wrote *Amazing Spider-Man* back in the '80s (issues #224-#252). Aside from the slam-bang, fast-paced action/adventure that Spider-Man should be knee-deep in, Stern understood what the core of Spidey was all about: a guy trying to make ends meet as a freelance photographer (and failing) with a disastrous social life, a supporting cast comprised of people you laughed and cried with, and an upbeat attitude about life and...was funny! Stern's Spider-banter was such that you'd find yourself laughing out loud at some of Spidey's quips.

With a dash of McFarlane, Booth is our pick for AMAZING SPIDER-MAN

With his return to the Spider-verse with the recent *Hobgoblin Lives* mini-series, Stern showed that it wouldn't take him more than a handful of issues to get his rhythm back and give us a Spider-Man that's true to the essence of the character.

WHY BOOTH: If you caught the recent two-issue *Spider-Man/Backlash* crossover (or even just the ads for the books), you probably thought the same thing we did: why the heck isn't this guy drawing Spider-Man full-time? Booth's style is reminiscent of the Todd McFarlane-drawn Spidey, but has an energy all its own that would help bring Spidey's fast-paced, kinetic adventures to life.

THE AVENGERS

WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTIST: Phil Jimenez

WHY MORRISON: Why would we want DC's *JLA* writer on *Avengers*? If anyone's been reading *JLA* lately, you'd know that Morrison handles DC's icons with such reverence that he truly understands them. His scripting prowess not only has the denizens of the DC Universe reacting to the JLA with awe and respect, but Morrison makes the reader feel it as well. Now if Morrison can do that for DC's superteam, we're bettin' he could do the same for its Marvel counterpart, the Avengers, truly making them Earth's Mightiest Heroes.

And for the record, our dream Avengers team is comprised of Avengers icons: Captain America (as team leader), Thor, Iron Man, Vision, the Scarlet Witch, Hawkeye and She-Hulk.

WHY JIMENEZ: Currently the penciler of the Vertigo title *The Invisibles*, Jimenez is one of comics' best-kept secrets. Aside from being a solid storyteller (a rare breed in today's comic world), his work is clean and detailed, combining flash with just enough realism to give the Avengers a majestic, serious look. (Plus, it doesn't hurt that his art style is reminiscent of former *Avengers*-guru George Pérez.) No offense to the Vertigo crowd, but this guy should be drawing superheroes.

CAPTAIN AMERICA

WRITER: Mark Waid
ARTIST: Ron Lim

WHY WAID: Let's face it: Waid's *Captain America* (#444-#454) was some of the best stuff since Roger Stern and John Byrne's run on the book from waaay back in the early '80s. Before exiting the book as part of the "Heroes Reborn" revamp, it seemed Waid was getting more and more comfortable with the character ('member, it took him a li'l while to really start kicking tail on DC's *The Flash*). His Cap was a soldier who also happened to be a superhero. He didn't necessarily believe in everything the U.S. government did, but believed in the ideals America was founded upon. No matter the obstacle, regardless of who or what or where it was, Waid's Cap did the job and did it right.

WHY LIM: Wanna see a great lookin' Cap? Check out *Captain America* #366-#393 which featured Lim's clean, uncluttered rendition of the star spangled Avenger—a style that many fans took to quite easily. His Cap is massive, towering over other characters, bulging with muscles and looking like the definitive superhero.

Lim demonstrated his skill (at top) during his stint on CAPTAIN AMERICA

Jimenez's sketch (at left) proves he can plenty handle Earth's Mightiest Heroes in AVENGERS

DAREDEVIL

WRITER: Matt Wagner
ARTIST: Rick Leonardi

WHY WAGNER: For those familiar with Wagner's work on DC/Vertigo's *Sandman Mystery Theatre* and the *Batman/Grendel* crossovers, you already know why Wagner is perfect for this book. He can tell moody, enthralling crime stories rich with intriguing supporting characters, plot twists that'll slap you across the kisser and bizarre villains that can be as disturbing as they are tragic. Under Wagner's keyboard, DD would become Marvel's "real-world" superhero, returning him to the crime roots that fan-favorite *DD* writer/artist Frank Miller established over 15 years ago.

WHY LEONARDI: Go check out the guest-issues of *DD* Leonardi did (#248-#249) for why he should handle ol' Hornhead on a regular basis. If that doesn't grab you, look at his action sequences with Spidey in *Spider-Man 2099*. His artwork can be clean for those light moments and gritty to depict the moody scenes and urban decay of DD's Hell's Kitchen neighborhood. He'd add to the flavor of this street-level crime book.

FANTASTIC FOUR

WRITER: Dan Jurgens
ARTIST: Carlos Pacheco

WHY JURGENS: Jurgens would bring this title back to its roots as the family book of the Marvel Universe: Reed Richards would be portrayed as the kindly, knowing father and the scatterbrained super-genius; Sue Richards as the warm and loving mom; Ben Grimm as the grumpy-but-lovable uncle; and Johnny Storm as the older brother who'd help get the beer for your party. How do we know this? Well, waaay back in *Adventures of Superman* #466, Jurgens pulled off an FF-homage team extremely well. Plus, Jurgens has proven himself on his Superman work to tell cosmic stories (the FF's specialty), intermix interpersonal relationships (Lois/Clark, Reed/Sue) and handle large supporting casts. We're bettin' we'd have a series of stories in the class of John Byrne's run in the early '80s.

WHY PACHECO: This guy rocks! Pacheco actually handled three issues of the *FF* before the "Heroes Reborn" revamp (#414-#416) and fans responded to his dynamic style so much that he was recently handed the plum assignment of penciling *X-Men*. With the costumes he redesigned on his short tenure, Pacheco gave us an FF that were true to the originals, yet modernized for the '90s. (And if he's good enough for *X-Men*, he's plenty good to make *Fantastic Four* Marvel's flagship title once again.)

Leonardi only needed a few guest-issues on DAREDEVIL (above) to get the nod

Pacheco's FANTASTIC FOUR (below) mixes a classic feel with a '90s look

GENERATION X

WRITERS: Tom & Mary Bierbaum
ARTIST: Chris Sprouse

WHY THE BIERBAUMS: With the debut of *Legionnaires*, this husband-and-wife team took a team of young Legion members and mixed a good blend of light elements with the dark, ultimately making it a super-fun title to read. Their soap-opera-ish teen angst and knack for distinguishing personalities in a large cast would make them a great match on *Generation X*. Plus, they've had some experience with our pick for artist...

WHY SPROUSE: Sprouse proved he could draw teenage superheroes when he helped launch *Legionnaires* a few years ago, and his current work on *NewMen* reinforces that ability. His clear storytelling style would totally fit this book, and he'd get to flex his artistic muscle a bit by drawing teen outcasts with freaky mutant powers. Bonus: he made an excellent collaborator with the Bierbaums on *Legionnaires*.

Based on this sketch (below) Sprouse is a GENERATION X natural

GHOST RIDER

WRITER: Warren Ellis
ARTIST: Andy Kubert

WHY ELLIS: With the dark, disturbing storytelling Ellis has shown he's capable of with the four-issue *Marvels: Ruins* mini-series, he'd fit right into this dark, eerie, almost Vertigo-esque corner of the Marvel Universe. In fact, Ellis wrote *Ghost Rider Annual* #2 and his brutal, no-holds-barred interpretation of the character saw a demonic avenger fighting dirty to get the job done. He made Ghost Rider a true Spirit of Vengeance.

WHY KUBERT: Check out Andy's *Ghost Rider* back in issues #28-#31. His versatility as an artist allows him to showcase his rough, gritty artwork that he hasn't utilized in his tenure on *X-Men*. His darker art style would compliment the edgier feel of this book and help give it a dangerous tone.

THE INCREDIBLE HULK

WRITER: Keith Giffen
ARTIST: Adam Kubert

WHY GIFFEN: Giffen's handling of DC's Lobo spotlighted a nigh-indestructible, super-strong tough guy who would as soon punch your head off as look at you, and he wasn't too keen on taking down the bad guys unless there was something in it for him. All that and it was done with a touch of dark and twisted humor which has been a mainstay in *Hulk* for long time now. That said, Giffen'd be right at home guiding the adventures of the jade giant.

WHY KUBERT: This guy's Hulk looks the way the green goliath should: not some giant green model, but a savage brute who's one of the most dangerous beings on Earth. Check out current issues of *Hulk* to see what we mean. Plus, as fans of *Wolverine* know, Adam's great at drawing money shots—something a big guy like the Hulk needs a lot of space for.

IRON MAN

WRITER: Peter David
ARTIST: Jim Calafiore

WHY DAVID: David has shown that he can take characters that many have written off as being "tapped out" (like the Hulk and Aquaman) and finding a way to breathe new life into them. Working with the "real" Tony Stark (not that "young Tony Stark" introduced in *Avengers: The Crossing*), David could define who Iron Man is, supply him with a strong supporting cast and mix the high-voltage superhero stuff with human struggles. David would understand that for all his high-tech armor and billionaire status, Stark often falls prey to

Andy Kubert's GHOST RIDER (at left) burns the competition

Adam Kubert and Jim Calafiore take the right approach to HULK (above) and IRON MAN (directly above)

common problems (alcoholism, a bad heart and girlfriend problems, to name but a few).

WHY CALAFIORE: Aside from being a solid artist and storyteller, Calafiore proved in *Iron Man* #325 that he could do what the classic *Iron Man* artists of the past did: draw lustrous, gleaming metallic surfaces. Be it Iron Man, the Dreadnaughts or the Crimson Dynamo, Calafiore gave us big, shiny, high-tech robot guys kicking the crap out of each other. And Calafiore has shown he can collaborate successfully with Peter David, based on their current *Aquaman* run.

PETER PARKER: SPIDER-MAN

WRITER: Kurt Busiek
ARTIST: Mike Wieringo

WHY BUSIEK: As he proves every month in *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*, Busiek has his finger on what makes Spidey tick (see our above write-up for *Amazing Spidey* as to what that is). Why this particular Spider-book? *Peter Parker: Spider-Man* focuses a lot on Peter and his supporting cast, and if you're familiar with Busiek's top-notch *Astro City*, you know two things: 1) He can write fast-paced superhero stories with the best of 'em and, more importantly, 2) he can handle "normal" people and "normal" problems like no other writer in comics today. Just the one-two punch a Spidey writer needs.

WHY WIERINGO: This guy's already on a Spider-book (*Sensational Spider-Man*) and if you've seen it, you know he was born to draw Spidey. Besides giving him a more classical look reminiscent of veteran Spidey artist John Romita Sr., Wieringo gives the Web-Head a visual sense of humor that is noticeable even without dialogue.

THE SENSATIONAL SPIDER-MAN

WRITER: Karl Kesel
ARTIST: Steve Skroce

WHY KESEL: While Kesel's run on *Daredevil* (#353-#364) was the best since Miller's take on ol' hornhead, the characterization of Daredevil seemed more appropriate for Spider-Man than it did DD (check out *DD* #334 for a taste of Kesel's Spidey). With his dead-on use of snappy, witty dialogue, superb handling of a diverse supporting cast and his portrayal of classic villains, Kesel's Spidey would be a must-read.

WHY SKROCE: As the current artist of *Amazing Spider-Man*, Skroce is great at making Spider-Man look eerie and spidery in his nigh-impossible action poses. His art style is just modern enough to give Spidey a '90s look, and would complement the three other Spidey artists we picked. Without mincing words, Skroce's Spidey just looks cool as hell.

We feel Skroce's Spider-talents would be better showcased in SENSATIONAL SPIDER-MAN

SILVER SURFER

WRITER: William Messner-Loebs
ARTIST: Ron Garney

WHY MESSNER-LOEBS: He's a good writer, yeah—but he's especially good at handling the "stranger in a strange land" angle that the Surfer, an alien who never fails to be misunderstood and distrusted, needs. Check out his confused, disoriented Maxx (*The Maxx* #1-present), Wonder Woman's trying to fit in with "normal" people (Wonder Woman #79-#100) and Thor's god-on-Earth situation (*Thor* #495-#502). The Surfer needs to find himself on all manners of offbeat, truly alien worlds and faced with all sorts of weird concepts, and if Messner-Loebs could handle the Maxx, he can handle anything.

WHY GARNEY: Bringing a Moebius-like quality to the current issues of the book, Garney gives us a humanoid Surfer, but one with a flat, emotionless and noticeably alien look. Tack on his fluid storytelling and clever use of the fact that the Surfer, always flying in the zero-G of space, can fly sideways, upside down, whichever way he wants, and you have a writer/artist combo that would make *Surfer* a unique, "through the eyes of an alien" book.

Garney's style on SILVER SURFER (above) brings an alien quality to the cosmic hero
Wieringo has experience drawing the Web-Slinger (at left), so switching him to PETER PARKER is no biggie

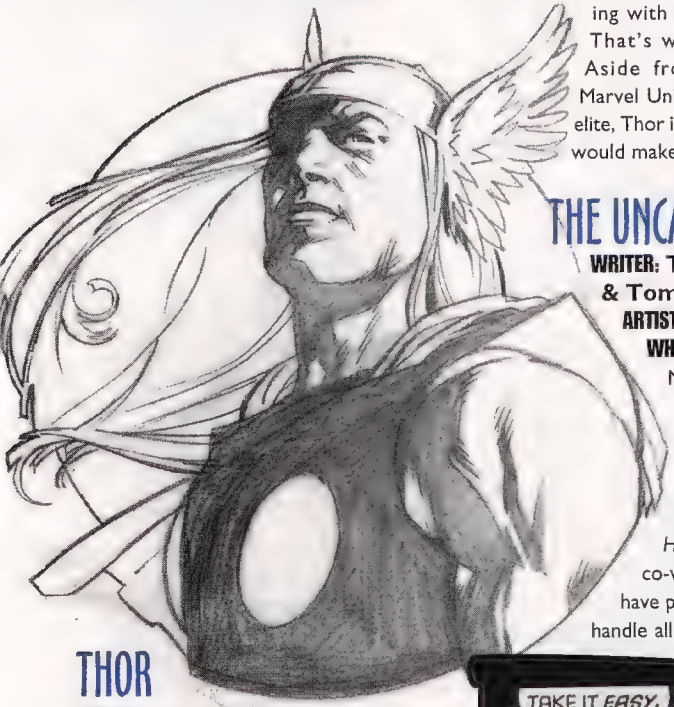
THE SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN

WRITER: Ron Marz
ARTIST: John Romita Jr.

WHY MARZ: Let's see...Marz writes *Green Lantern* for DC. A book about a young superhero who is still getting the hang of things, isn't a stranger to screwing up, has a shaky personal life, isn't a superhero for the glory, but wears tights because it's the right thing to do and does it all with a sense of humor? Yeah...he *might* be able to handle Spidey...

WHY ROMITA JR.: A veteran Spidey artist (currently seen on *Peter Parker: Spider-Man*), Romita Jr. has proven time and again that he draws an awesome Spider-Man. Besides being one of the flat-out best storytellers in the biz, Romita Jr. brings a classic-looking, dynamic and fun Spider-Man to life.

Romita Jr. gives Spidey that classic look for SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN



THOR

WRITER: Jeph Loeb
ARTIST: Stuart Immonen

WHY LOEB: Hey, his portrayal of Thor in the "Heroes Reborn" *Avengers* is pretty good. In fact, it's the best Thor we've seen since Walt Simonson's killer run on *Thor* (#337-#382). Loeb's Thor is what he should be: a Norse Viking God. Unrefined, he has difficulty fitting into the modern world and enjoys drinking almost as much as he enjoys kicking ass. And Loeb has shown in the pages of *Batman: The Long Halloween* that he can also weave an intriguing web of supporting characters, something that's always been missing in the pages of *Thor* (yeah, Odin, Sif and Balder are great, but Thor needs a compelling human supporting cast as well). Then just focus this book 50 percent on Earth and 50 percent on Asgard (for that unique superhero/fantasy feel) and this book would be a winner.

WHY IMMONEN: Immonen's Superman, currently seen in *Adventures of Superman*, is just that: Super. He's massive, towering over mere mortal men and almost glowing with a majestic nature. That's what Thor needs. Aside from being in the Marvel Universe powerhouse elite, Thor is a GOD. Immonen would make him look the part.

THE UNCANNY X-MEN

WRITER: Tom McCraw & Tom Peyer
ARTIST: Joe Madureira

WHY MCCRAW & PEYER: McCraw and Peyer, who already handle the writing chores of DC's popular teen hero book *Legion of Super Heroes* (McCraw also co-writes *Legionnaires*), have proven that they can handle all the great elements of Marvel's mutants: familial team camaraderie, compelling character interaction and a strong school element (*à la* more training in the Danger Room, since these guys are always learning new ways to use their powers).

McCraw and Peyer never skimp on the action, can handle a large cast of characters (there's over 20 Legionnaires, not including the numerous supporting characters), each character has their own distinct personality and there are more spellbinding subplots than you could shake Chris Claremont at.

WHY MADUREIRA: 'Cause Madureira is kicking great, big monster ass on this book already. In his favor: a dynamic in-your-face art style, plus, he's a solid storyteller and the best costume designer we've seen since ex-X-artist Dave Cockrum. This guy is the total package.

WOLVERINE

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTIST: Javier Saltares & Mark Texeira

WHY ENNIS: He's shown that he's a natural at writing take-no-crap tough guys (see *Preacher*, *Hitman*) and they don't come much tougher than Mr. Logan. Toss in how Ennis' stories can take outrageous situations with a real-world spin and you'd have more "realistic" stories and less time-travel and dimension-hopping that so often bogs this title down. And heck, we'd just wanna see what ridiculously over-the-top stuff Ennis would put Logan and his much-vaunted healing factor through.

WHY SALTARES & TEXEIRA: Back when this team handled *Ghost Rider* (#1-#12) they produced a tough, gritty style which would compliment Ennis' harder-edged, more realistic

Immonen'd treat THOR (above) with the respect a Norse god deserves, while Madureira (right) is already kicking butt on UNCANNY X-MEN

X-FACTOR

WRITER: James Robinson
ARTIST: Bernard Chang

WHY ROBINSON: Robinson's run on *WildC.A.T.s* featured the standard 'C.A.T.s team, but the real fun was watching what he did with the Black Razors, a government strikeforce. Let's see...they were run by the government, were forced to go on missions that members didn't necessarily agree with, nobody on the team liked their leader (each having plausible reasons) and Robinson did it all in a really entertaining way. Hmmm...with X-Factor comprised of 99 percent villains, a semi-distrusting/unlikeable leader and funded by a government with questionable goals...well, Mr. Robinson would give us a superteam that plays on the wrong side of the fence.

WHY CHANG: He's got a crisp clean style, is a good storyteller and is ready to step up to the big-time. His artwork would be a good complement to the art on the other X-team-books.

stories. This art team's rendition of Wolverine would look like a brawler who ain't afraid to get his claws dirty.

Chang's style on X-FACTOR (below) would compliment the other X-books, as Saltares and Texeira would take a grittier approach to WOLVERINE (art by Texeira shown above right). Grummett brings his mastery of teen heroes to this sketch of Boomer from X-FORCE (above right)

X-FORCE

WRITER: Chuck Dixon
ARTIST: Tom Grummett

WHY DIXON: Dixon's already proven he can write teenage heroes better than almost anybody (his work on *Robin* is dead-on with dialogue and current teen-angst) and he handles gritty militaristic interaction like nobody's business (*Punisher: War Zone*, *Team 7*, *Bruce Wayne Agent of S.H.I.E.L.D.*). Combine the two and you've got yourself a writer who could handle a group of militaristic, angst-ridden mutant teens on the run from both the bad guys *and* the good guys.

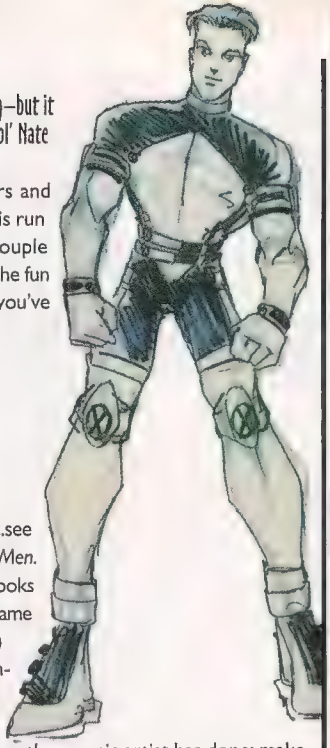
WHY GRUMMETT: Nobody, and we mean *nobody*, draws teenagers as well as Tom Grummett does. Yeah, he's a solid, clean-styled artist and top-notch storyteller, but when he draws a young kid, it doesn't look like a short adult, they look like actual teenagers. And hey, he's already worked well with Dixon before on *Robin*.

X-MAN

WRITER: Christopher Priest
ARTIST: Humberto Ramos

WHY PRIEST: He had a great teen atmosphere cooking with another teen superhero book, *The Ray*, and has shown he can do top-notch humor and realistic buddy-buddy/friction relationships in Acclaim's waaaaaay underrated *Quantum & Woody* (which could come in handy when dealing with Nate and his gal-pal Threnody).

WHY RAMOS: He's shown that he can draw



Is that a Ramos-drawn X-MAN?
No, it's Metalsmith from X-Nation 2099—but it shows Ramos'd be a perfect match for ol' Nate

both teenage-looking teenagers and pull-off clever sight-gags with his run on DC's *Impulse* (#1-#25). Couple that with his style fitting in with the fun look of the other X-books and you've got a perfect fit.

X-MEN

WRITER: Tom Peyer & Tom McCraw
ARTIST: Martin Egeland
WHY MCCRAW & PEYER: Ummm...see what we said about *Uncanny X-Men*. (Oh, and that the two X-Men books should have consistency with the same writers working on both books.)
WHY EGELAND: Aside from complimenting Joe Madureira's style on *Uncanny*, former *Aquaman*-artist Egeland has done what no other comic artist has done: make seemingly dull underwater scenes look cool and yet never let you forget the story is taking place underwater. Geez, if he can make

Just imagine that Aquaman is Cyclops, and Power Girl is Storm, and you can see why Egeland would be good fit for X-MEN

underwater scenes exciting, just think what he could do with the X-Men's bizarre backdrops (The Savage Land, outer space, post-apocalyptic futures, the Danger Room, Taco Bell, etc.). W

The only thing the Wizard *staff would find more entertaining than sitting around a big room making up creative teams for these Marvel books would be reading them.*

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THE WIZARD Q&A:

After the much-hyped 'Marvels' and 'Kingdom Come,' Alex Ross paints a different picture with the low-profile 'Uncle Sam'

Alex Ross has a lot on his mind today. You'd think he'd be taking time off to catch his breath, now that the convention circuit's relentless pace has slowed. Maybe even kick back to bask in the acclaim from *Kingdom Come*, last summer's mega-hit mini-series, which he created with writer Mark Waid for DC Comics.

Not a chance.

Instead, he's racing to finish end papers, section dividers, background notes and other supplements to the *Kingdom Come* hardcover editions, the first of which will be out in May. He's also hard at work painting the pages for his next project, *Uncle Sam*, a two-issue mini-series he's creating with writer and longtime friend Steve Darnall to be published by Vertigo in October.

Besides, basking isn't Ross' way. The soft-spoken painter has dazzled fans with his meticulous, realistic approach to superheroes, as well as with his intense interest in their histories and origins. So it's no surprise he has to clear away a jumble of tabloid and digest-sized reprint comics, sketch pages and notepads from the couch before being interviewed.

As we settle in beneath his prized possession, an oil painting by Chris Ware (*Acme Novelty Library*), Ross gestures at the furniture filling the living room of the house he's now renting in Chicago's suburbs. "Everything you see here is a new stage in my life," he says.

That attitude represents his professional life as well. Ross burst onto the comics scene in 1994 with *Marvels*, which shot both him and collaborator Kurt Busiek to stardom. He followed that up with *Kingdom Come*, which was critically acclaimed and matched the enormous hype—no easy feat. Now, Ross is ratcheting things back with his new project, a "political fiction" story about the symbol of America (the Montgomery Flagg-inspired "I Want You" icon, not the Quality/DC Uncle Sam superhero). It's a new direction and offers the perfect time for Ross to reflect on where he goes after producing two of the industry's best-received and most-heralded projects.

WIZARD: Were you surprised by the incredibly positive reaction you got to *Kingdom Come*?

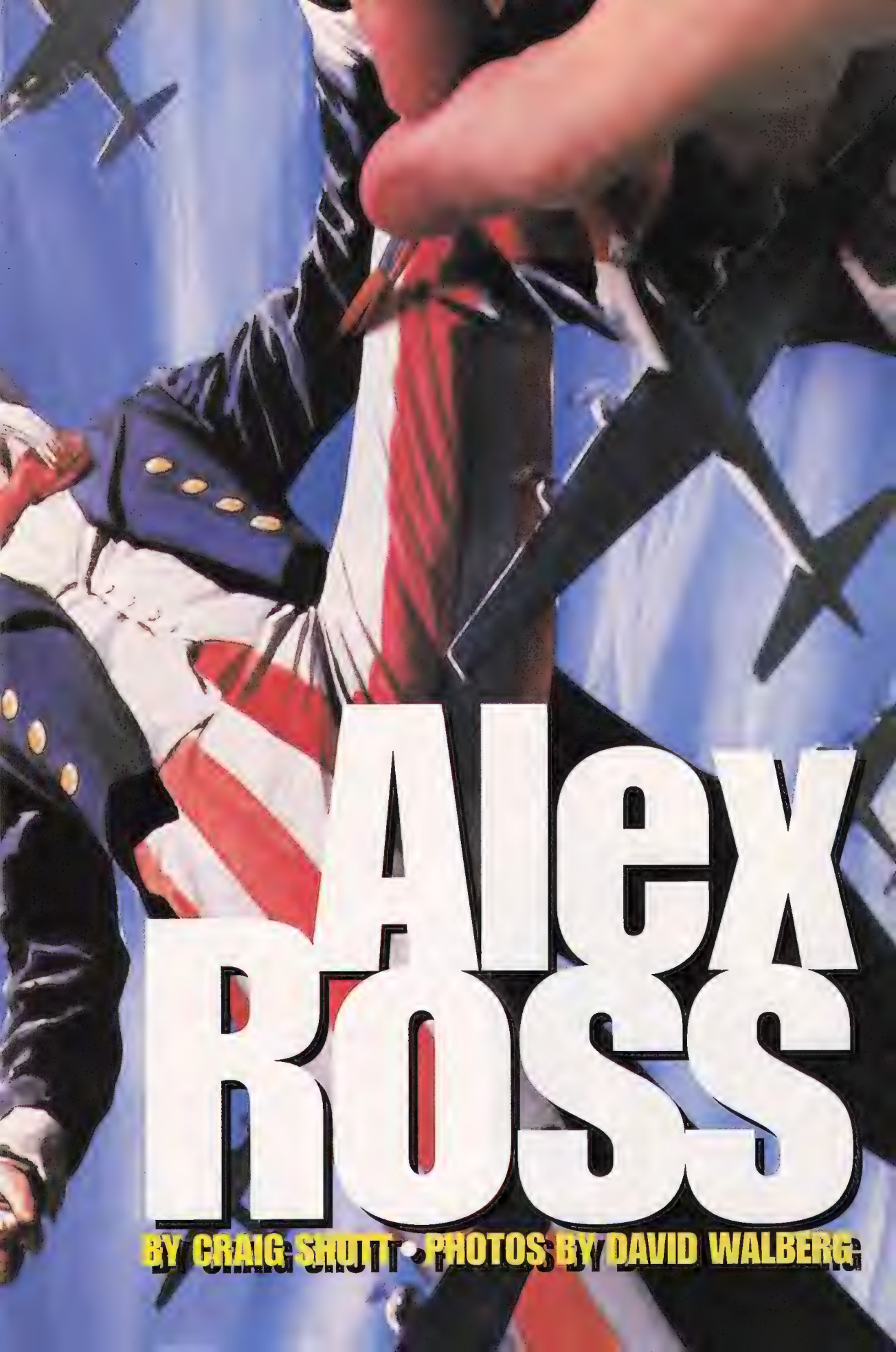
ALEX ROSS: I was surprised that the way people reacted to it was even better than the grandiose way they reacted to *Marvels*. With *Marvels*, I thought, geez, this is as good as it gets, or at least as good as it *needs* to get. I thought to equal that response would be challenge enough. Yet *Kingdom Come* did it one better. It didn't exactly become a Beatles thing, we didn't become the new Neil Gaimans of the comics world, but it was extremely satisfying. I don't even intend to *try* to achieve that acceptance and expectation again.

How many of your original ideas for *Kingdom Come* made it into the final version?

Ninety percent of what I had was used, and the rest was replaced with something better. I had all this bad stuff happening, and a big, climactic battle between Captain Marvel and Superman. I knew how Captain Marvel would say, "Shazam!" and blow Superman to bits each time, and how the nuclear bomb would fall and how Superman would be raging at the temple of the U.N. building. But I had no way to get to that point, and nothing really worked.

It was Mark's idea to introduce the major plot device of the prison and have the superheroes do what we've done as a society—set up a system of justice and laws. That underlined every point I hoped to get out of the series. My plan always was to relate the series to the current, over-

Alex Ross (left) gets a touch of Vertigo with his upcoming Uncle Sam project

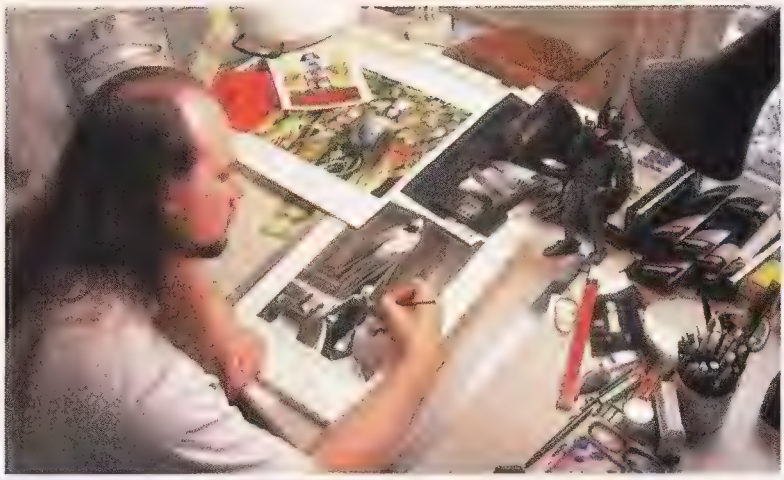


Alex Ross

BY CRAIG SHUTT • PHOTOS BY DAVID WALBERG

Vital Stats

Name: Alex Ross
Occupation: Comic book painter
Born: January 22, 1970 in Portland, Ore.; grew up in Lubbock, Texas, "the home of Buddy Holly."
Base of Operations: Chicago suburbs
Career Highlights: Came to prominence by painting Marvel's acclaimed *Marvels* mini-series with writer Kurt Busiek in 1993, launching both careers; did (and still does) covers and character designs for Busiek's creator-owned series *Astro City*; followed *Marvels* with 1996's biggest project, *Kingdom Come*, a perverse vision of DC's future with writer Mark Waid; now gears up for *Uncle Sam*, an offbeat Vertigo mini-series with rookie writer Steve Darnall.
Most embarrassing secret: Owns a black 1950 Studebaker, the bullet-nosed model for the 1950s Batmobile, which he can convert into a life-size replica complete with bat symbol on the hood and dorsal bat-fin. "I came up with the idea when I was 19, and now I'm embarrassed I still have it. I'm not even sure I can put the pieces on it anymore. What I liked about that Batmobile was that it was so enormous—he had an entire lab in the back of it."



bearing nature of superhero comics and create a parable that related to today's industry.

My only regret was that in 1993 when I started working on it, I was hoping to create a prophetic warning of where comics were heading. By the time *Kingdom Come* appeared, it had become more of a documentation of where comics already had gone. We came out right after *Marvel versus DC* [the highly successful crossover mini-series starring both Marvel and DC characters], and very little else could have preceded us and shown as clearly where superhero comics were.

Do you have any regrets about how the series turned out?

Oh, there are plenty of little things people didn't get that I was hoping they would. And I can look back and find a million things wrong with every page and every character design. With a lot of the designs for the new generation of superheroes, I could have challenged myself more. Initially, I wanted to represent all the various modern styles of design in comics, like manga. But I did a piss-poor job of getting into that, because it's not my sense of design. I spent more time finding cameos for all of Mr. Mind's Monster Society of Evil. [*Laughs*] That's the kind of thing I strangely enjoy more.

Did you have a favorite design or character?

Definitely Superman. His costume was so bold, I felt like I was drawing the character for the first time ever. His design cut through all the bull of other designs. It wasn't horrifically vain or over the top, it was fairly modest. It had a lot of class to it, with the midnight blue and dark red. And I really enjoyed the simplicity that I could bring to the symbol on his chest, which DC didn't oppose. In fact, there was no costume they gave me a rough time about. I'm grateful they let me bring an undiluted artistic vision to it. Every time I did a Superman page, I was thinking, "Boy, I'm really getting to do something golden here."

I'd have thought your favorite part would have been painting your father [who posed for *Kingdom Come*'s protagonist Norman McCay].

I was glad to get to illustrate my dad, but that's what he looks like! Artistically, I wasn't bringing that much to him that wasn't already there.

The same with Batman. My version wasn't that much of a departure from what DC allows now, except I had him smiling. That seems to be forbidden by the Batman office now. But we presented him in a way that *should* be accepted today. He was witty and showed that he had fully accepted his fate in life. I always tried to show him smiling like a grinning little devil; he intimidated you with that grin.

The other innovation I brought to many of the characters was showing their thinning hair. Maybe that's a personal crusade of mine. [*Laughs*] I showed that the DC gene pool is not perfect.

Did you get any criticism of the series?

The biggest was that all the background characters were distracting; the older, more-interested fans were upset we didn't give enough information to satisfy them. I was hoping they would stay focused on the story and not be distracted by that—you don't want to know the stories of each of the 1,000 slaves building the pyramids in a Biblical epic. The problem was that I made each character so intensely individual-looking that it attracted attention.

It's a Catch-22, because the *point* of the story was to overpopulate it, and I had no interest in creating a generic band of mutants. It reaches the stage where everyone in the series is a superhero. That's the exact opposite of *Marvels*, where you only got glimpses.

Is there any character you didn't use that you wish you'd put in?

The only ones I didn't use were really recent char-

No, that's not Norman McCay standing behind Ross—it's his dad, who posed for the Kingdom Come *character*

acters, like Damage, who still had his own book at the time. I was afraid there would be real pressure to include those contemporary guys, and I would have had to figure out who Damage would be in 20 years. No thanks.

I also didn't use Plastic Man [except in a one-panel cameo], because he doesn't really belong in *Kingdom Come*. To me, he's a primary comic book icon who represents one of the major classifications of fiction, along with Superman [science fiction], Batman [mystery], Wonder Woman [myth] and Captain Marvel [magic].

Plastic Man married humor and superhero comics, and *Kingdom Come* was too dark for him. That also made it a tough book for Mark to write, I think. He likes a good sense of humor in his work, and a lot of that was bled out of this story. He got in a few good quips with Deadman and Batman, but it was difficult.

How upset were you at not being able to include your New Gods interpretation, originally planned to be in the series?

I was extremely unhappy with the editor [Dan Raspler] and Mark for cutting that out when the story ran long. I was ready to kill them both. I pressured DC to let me do it, but right up to the end, the editor resisted the sequence. He didn't think there was a story rationale for it; he thought I just wanted to illustrate Orion.

I wanted to show Orion as an example of former comrades who weren't coming to the heroes' aid for various reasons. Since Aquaman was placed in that role, they decided Orion wasn't necessary. But there's so much greater richness in the Orion scene because of how much he'd changed, and I still wanted to show it. I had to beat it through to get to do it [in a four-page addition to the hardcover editions], so hopefully readers will agree that I was right. [*Laughs*] And I'll be able to tell my editor that he was being a pain in the ass for no reason.

Did you and Mark get along as collaborators? You've mentioned that he probably thought you were annoying because of your continual input.

I think it was a different way of working than Mark has had to do before, because nobody has ever picked away at him like I did. But my feeling was that I had the initial concept for the story, so I was destined to be a phenomenal pain in the ass.

With *Kingdom Come*, I had a structure in place and knew exactly where I wanted to go—I just didn't know how to get there. That's different than with *Marvels*, where I had some initial scenes and Kurt [Busiek] had to create a storyline from an amalgamation of individual ideas and put them together into a harmonious whole.

I like a good argumentative process that reaches a conclusion after debating all the possible ways to go. I don't think that's Mark's favorite way of working. Ultimately, the end product made it worth it, and I think Mark did some of his finest work on it. I couldn't be happier with how our collaboration turned out.

Why aren't you going to be involved now with *Kingdom*? [EDITOR'S NOTE: *Kingdom* is the ongoing series that DC plans on releasing this summer based on the *Kingdom Come* characters. It will be written by Waid and drawn by Gene Ha.]

I bailed out after collaborating on ideas for about seven months without getting very much onto the table that anyone was at all happy with. None of my ideas were hitting home with Mark or the editor, and I wasn't interested in the direction they were going. I had been told going in that this had to be Mark's baby, because he would be writing it every month and would have to live with it, whereas I would just be doing covers and character designs. And he wasn't warming to the ideas I was throwing out.

I had always figured any follow-ups to *Kingdom Come* would be done by other editors and writers,

Ross got the chance to redesign or "update" some of DC's classic characters in Kingdom Come *(Superman was his favorite)*

but we were urged to be involved. Mark agreed to commit, but I always had my finger on the "Cancel" button if I wasn't liking the direction we were going. I'm embarrassed it got out that I was definitely involved before I'd really committed.

I'm sorry I had to leave, but it's better that they do something they're inspired by and bring their own personal vision to it. I knew I would get disgruntled quickly just being someone's cover boy.

But that's what you do for *Astro City*.

That's Kurt [Busiek]'s baby; he conceived it from whole cloth. I'm very much at peace with it being his creative vision and me being just a portion of what makes it sellable. With *Kingdom*, I didn't think I could fall back so much and just go with the flow.

How closely do you work with Kurt in creating the character designs for *Astro City*?

The final designs come pretty quickly, except sometimes on the pivotal characters. We bickered about Samaritan all through the summer of 1993! [*Laughs*] I made sure that it was absolutely the one to go with when I did the final version that made us both happy.

When we talk about the covers, Kurt often has just a story outline ready, so I'm really the first one to do my job. We discuss it and Brent [Anderson, the series' penciler] coordinates his designs to fit in the cover image. It works extremely well. I've never seen anyone follow a template [for character design] as well as Brent does. He got down exactly what I was going for with Samaritan right from the start.

Brent designs a lot of characters too. He created the Hanged Man, as well as all of the Kirby-like villains the First Family fought in issue #3. They're beautiful; such a great range of body types. I really envied him those.

Do you foresee doing a regular *Astro City* story, either in pencils or paint?

I would like to, but my focus has been on big projects that draw a lot of attention, and I haven't seen anything in *Astro City* that I would want to take a year to do. We've discussed doing a story based on the Gentleman [who appeared in Vol. 2, #1], which would take place in the Golden Age and be done in black and white. That would let me flex *that* painting muscle, which is different than color. But I would really begrudge letting go of my painting aesthetic.

What I'd really like to do is exercise some of my cartooning skills. I have an open invitation to do a special issue of the *Superman Adventures*, and maybe I can find a hole [in my schedule] later this year. I'd love to do a more humorous take on the Superman/Captain Marvel fight from *Kingdom Come*, which was inspired by the *Mad* parody by Wally Wood [and Harvey Kurtzman, called "Superduperman vs. Capt. Marbles," in *Mad* #4]. I really love that story.

What's your next project, *Uncle Sam*, about?

It's a voyage of self-discovery for him—and for us, since we *are* Uncle Sam. It really started in 1991, when I came up with this image of the Uncle Sam icon as a bum—not degraded so much as

weathered by the spiritual self-destruction of America. Through the course of the story, he'll feel the pain of the nation, whatever it is.

We have a formidable number of social problems in this country. I live in a major metropolis where you see this all the time. I've become a part of the ignorance of social ills that looks past those things, and it reinforces for me that we're not where we need to be as a culture. We don't place as high a value on preventing these things as we should.

Did you plot the book?

I'm co-plotting with Steve [Darnall], and he's writing it, much like I worked with Mark. We're in perfect synch on this. We both had the same idea and are coming to it very equally. The difference in this case is that I have created Steve. [*Laughs*] He owes his shot at the big time to me, and I'm always going to remind him of that.

I'm sick of working with writers who do all these projects every month and find that the project they're doing with me, big deal though it may be, becomes a distraction. To Steve, this *is* his big book and demands all his attention. I like that influence and that power. He's wonderful to work with, as are [Vertigo editors] Karen Berger and Joan Hilty.

Did you deliberately pick a lower-profile project this time?

I knew that no matter what I did following *Kingdom Come*, I couldn't expect the same kind of success. I wanted to create my own step down off that ladder of excessive financial triumph. I've been lucky enough to manipulate circumstances twice in a row to my favor, but this time I want to engineer new circumstances. Rather than hope lightning will strike a third time, I'd rather do something artistically different that shows I've tried to grow.

No matter how well *Uncle Sam* does, it'll be enough of a success for me because we tried it. It may not have the same fan reception, but I expect that. In fact, it's possible it will offend many people who have enjoyed my work. It's a soap-box-like comic book, very preachy. It's planned to charge up your social conscience about America in a hopefully entertaining way. It's not going to give people what they expect, but that's exactly why it should exist.

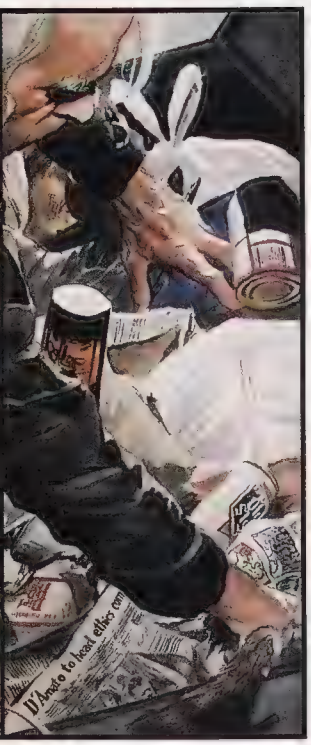
What should we expect after *Uncle Sam*?

I'm hoping to do a project to commemorate Superman's 60th anniversary [in 1998]. I'm still inspired by [Superman co-creator] Joe Shuster's version, and I can't get it out of me! I've done 400 illustrations of that Superman, and I'm not tired of him yet. I'm equally inspired to do projects celebrating the 60th anniversaries of Batman [1999], Captain Marvel [2000] and Wonder Woman [2001].

Creatively, I know I should be moving to less superhero-oriented fare and getting into independent projects. But I can't help what I'm inspired by. I still love to draw Superman; it's still too satisfying.

The only important thing is that there's a challenge to it. That's why I'm doing *Uncle Sam*. It's been a great challenge to do the historical research that lets me draw so many crowds of boring, ordinary-looking people and make it interesting for the reader. The gauntlet has been laid down to challenge me to get better. W

Craig Shutt once painted a pony. And what a fine-lookin' pony it was.



What's to Come

Alex Ross' few projects tend to make a splash when they appear. In addition to his ongoing design/cover work for *Astro City*, here's what's on the horizon:

***Kingdom Come* hardcover editions**

Graphitti Designs and DC will co-produce two hardcover editions featuring a new four-page scene with the New Gods and an eight-page epilogue set in the Planet Krypton restaurant. The deluxe slipcase with additional goodies ships in May and a plain ol' hardcover edition will follow in July. (The planned trade paperback edition has not yet been scheduled.)

The slipcase edition will include a 96-page paperback called *Kingdom Come: Revelations* which includes close to 100 pages of character sketches and a five-page DC Comics "family tree" detailing the lineage of over 200 characters. It includes many new paintings, including title pages to separate the characters by Superman and Batman's armies, the former Teen Titans, the New Breed superheroes and the Wild Cards (all the miscellaneous characters, like Aquaman).

"Most people have never seen these, except for the handful that ran in *Wizard* [#57]," he says. "All the backstory I know will be included." The edition also will feature all covers, promotional posters and magazine covers done for the series, as well as annotations and photos of the models Ross used for his paintings. There will also be a section by Waid reflecting on the story and showing some script pages.

***Kingdom Come* novelization**

Ross will do four inked and four painted plates for the Elliot S. Maggin novelization coming this fall. "It's pretty strange to see inked versions of my painted characters," he says. "They're simplistic designs of portraiture of the major characters, but they still look like my style."

***Kingdom Come* audio tape**

Planned for the fall, it will feature Ross artwork on the packaging.

Uncle Sam

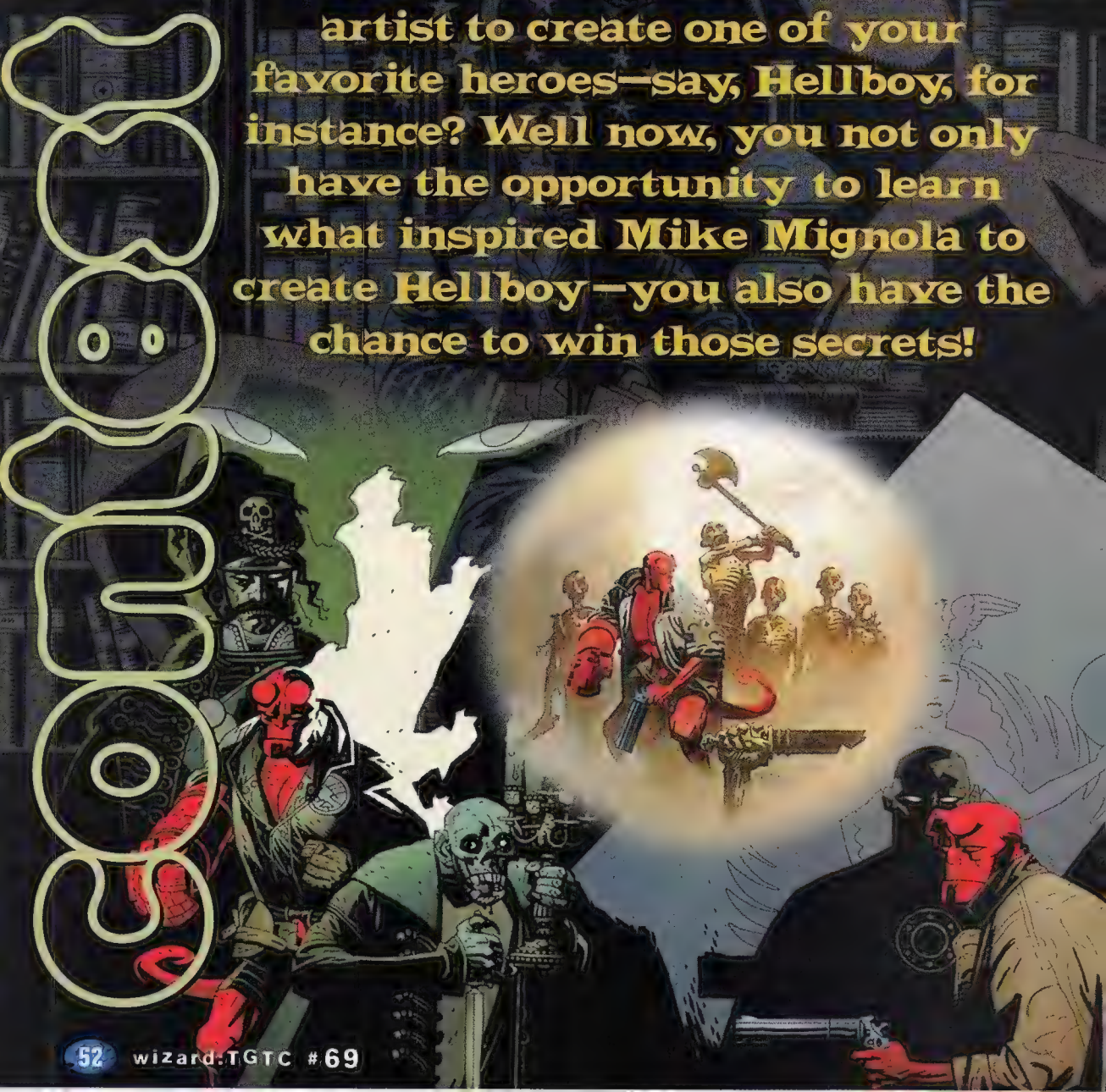
This two-part, 48-page Vertigo miniseries is currently planned for October and November. ■ *CS*

A sneak peek from Ross' upcoming Uncle Sam *(this page and opposite)*

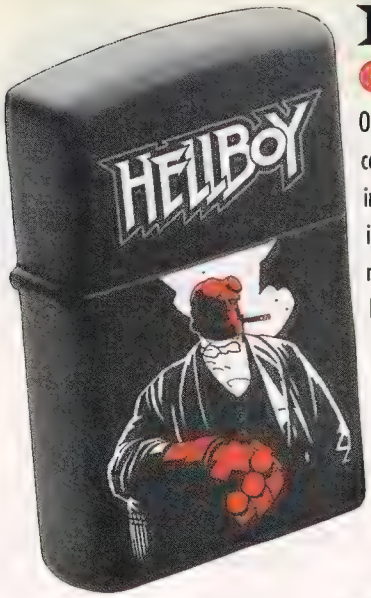
Dark Horse Presents:

The Arcane Secrets of Hellboy Contest

Ever wonder what inspires an artist to create one of your favorite heroes—say, Hellboy, for instance? Well now, you not only have the opportunity to learn what inspired Mike Mignola to create Hellboy—you also have the chance to win those secrets!



This contest is just so dang simple, it hurts! Simply fill out the coupon, cut it out and mail it in! It's that easy! Winners will be randomly selected.



PRIZES

Grand Prize (1):

One lucky reader will receive a personalized collection of books (and stuff) which helped to inspire Mike in creating his *Hellboy* series! Items include an original piece of Mignola artwork and novels by Stephen King, H.P. Lovecraft, Ray Bradbury and others—each with handwritten notes explaining why they're special! Entire package valued at over $500!

Second Prize (5):

Five readers will receive a signed *Hellboy: Wake the Devil* trade paperback and a Hellboy Zippo lighter, items which aren't available until later this summer!

Third Prize (10): Ten readers will receive a copy of *Hellboy: Almost Colossus* #1, signed by Mike Mignola.

This contest is sponsored by Dark Horse.

DARK HORSE COMICS®

Fill this sucker out, put it in an envelope and send it to: "The Arcane Secrets of Hellboy" Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is May 30, 1997!

The Fire and Brimstone Legal Stuff

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Dark Horse, their immediate families and Ozzy Osbourne. He's like, a crazy devil man, y'know. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: "The Arcane Secrets of Hellboy" Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to soil this publication. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. We're only kidding about Ozzy being a crazy devil man. He is crazy and stuff, but he's just a rock singer. Salt 'n' Pepa? Now there's some weird stuff goin' on in there, yes sir. All entries must be received at contest headquarters by May 30, 1997. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected randomly by Wizard Press. Drawing will take place on June 16, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after June 16, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: "The Arcane Secrets of Hellboy" Contest Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Arcane Secrets of Hellboy Entry Form

DEADLINE IS MAY 30, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Basic Training

this month's host: Tom Grummett

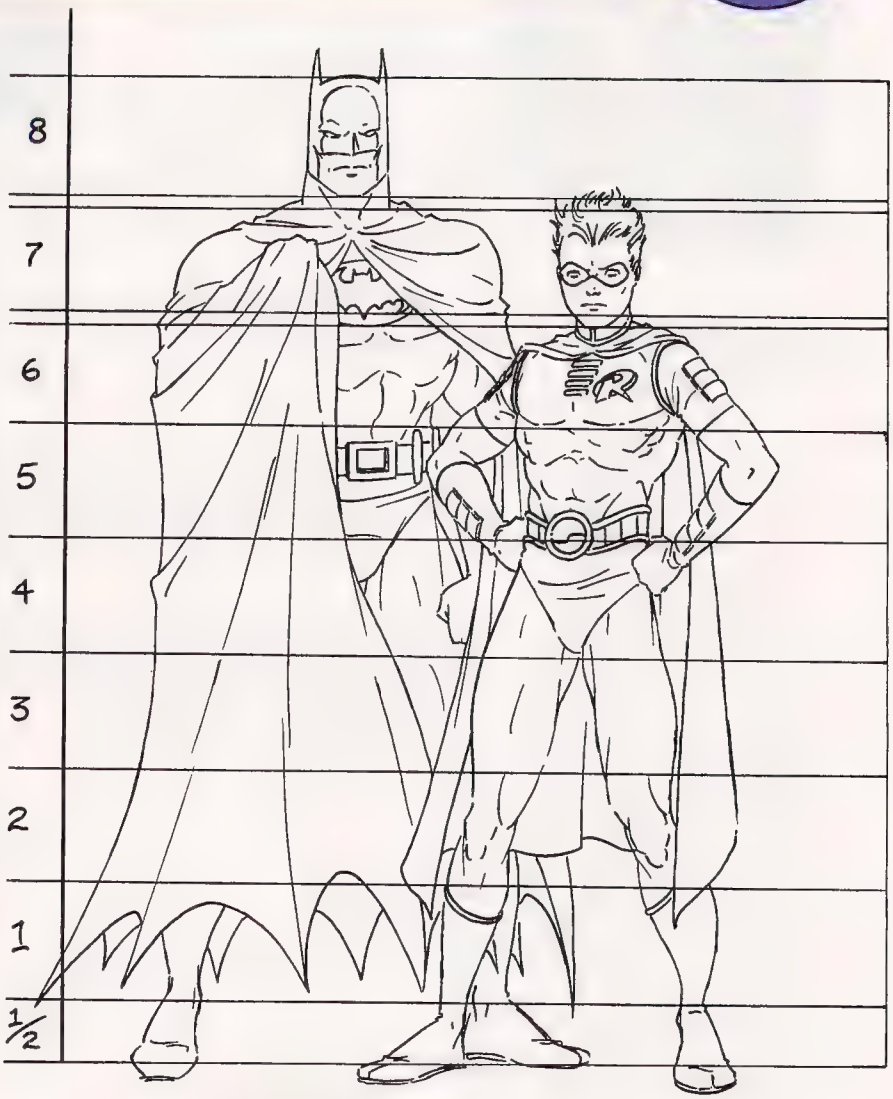
How to Draw Teen Superheroes

I've been told that a number of you are interested in drawing teenage heroes, and I've been invited to share some of the tricks and techniques I use to draw characters like Robin, the Generation X members and Superboy. Now to be brutally honest, I'm far from an expert on the subject—many of the techniques I use were developed by trial and error, observation, and *tons* of practice. As any artist will tell you, the study of art and drawing is an ongoing learning process. But what I hope to do, in this limited space, is provide you with a basic approach to drawing teen superheroes and help you avoid some pitfalls along the way. I'm going on the assumption that you're already familiar with drawing the male and female "heroic" figure. (If you're not, you better get crackin' on those anatomy books!) So if everyone's ready, let's roll up our sleeves and get started.

Guys are Scrawny

To illustrate the contrast between the heroic figure and the teen figure, let's take a look at Batman and Robin.

As you can see, Batman, like most "heroic" figures, is about 8 1/2 heads tall in stature. In comparison, Robin stands about 7 heads tall. This doesn't simply make Robin shorter than Batman—proportionally, I've made Robin's head larger in relation to the rest of his body. What we're aiming for is to visually signal to the reader that our teen character is younger, and therefore, less developed than his adult counterpart. We have to do more than just scale down adult proportions, or all we'd have is a shorter adult. As you can see, Robin isn't built as powerfully as Batman: He's got narrower shoulders, a more compact torso, and leaner arms and legs. To emphasize Robin's youth, we want to tone down the powerful, muscular superhero build in favor of a lean, yet athletic, frame. We want to believe that Robin's capable of daring feats, but we don't want him to appear too bulky.

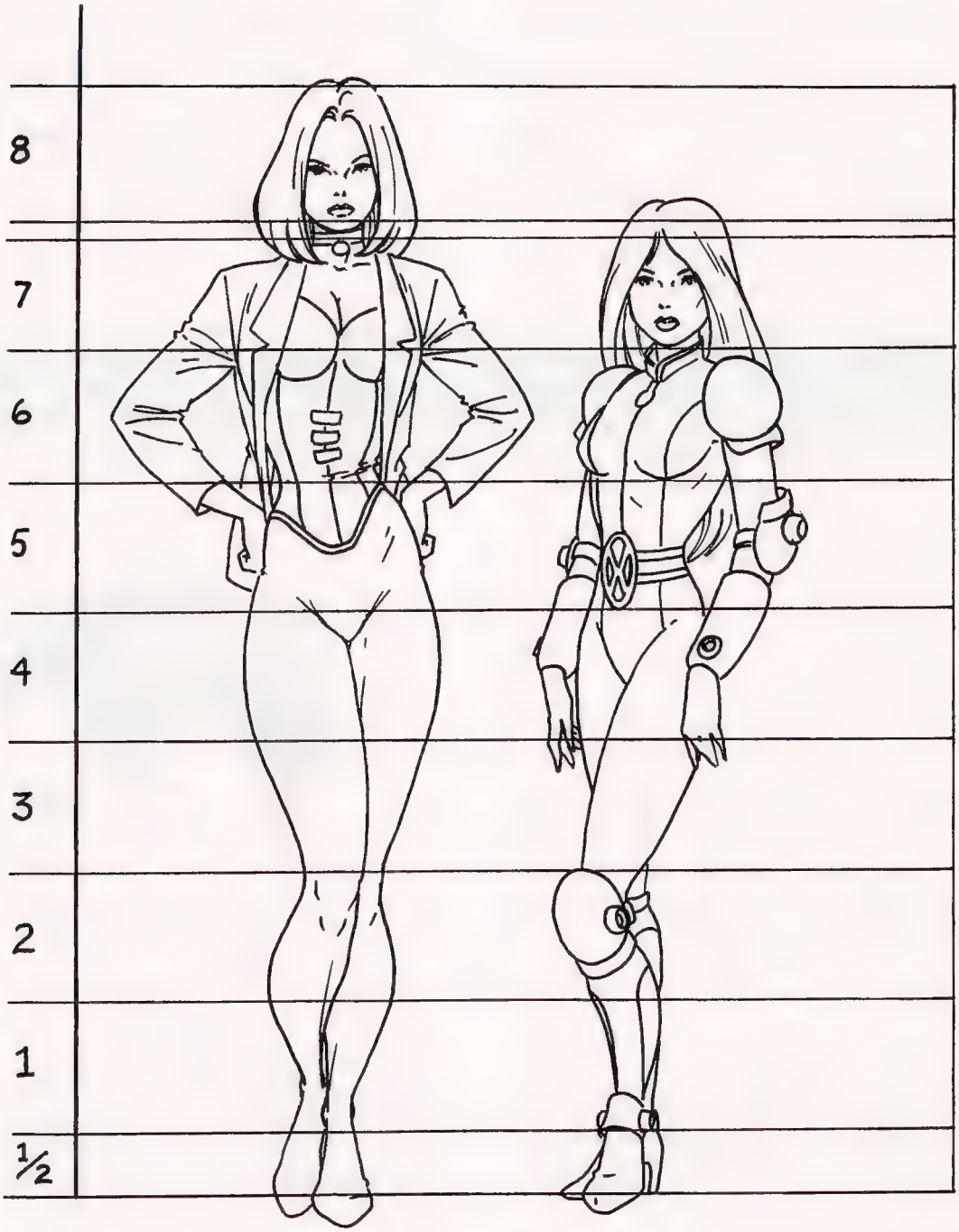


Girls are More Mature

First, some facts of life. Since girls tend to mature faster than boys, they are more fully developed by the age of 13 to 16, while boys don't begin to gain adult characteristics until their mid-to-late teens. Therefore, for drawing purposes, a 16-year-old female will differ only slightly from her adult counterpart, as shown below by the White Queen and Generation X's Husk.

The White Queen stands at 8 1/2 heads tall, contrasting with Husk at 7 heads tall. Again, we want to emphasize Husk's relative youth (without sacrificing her femininity) over the more idealized stature and build of the White Queen. By making Husk shorter, we change her head size to body size proportion.

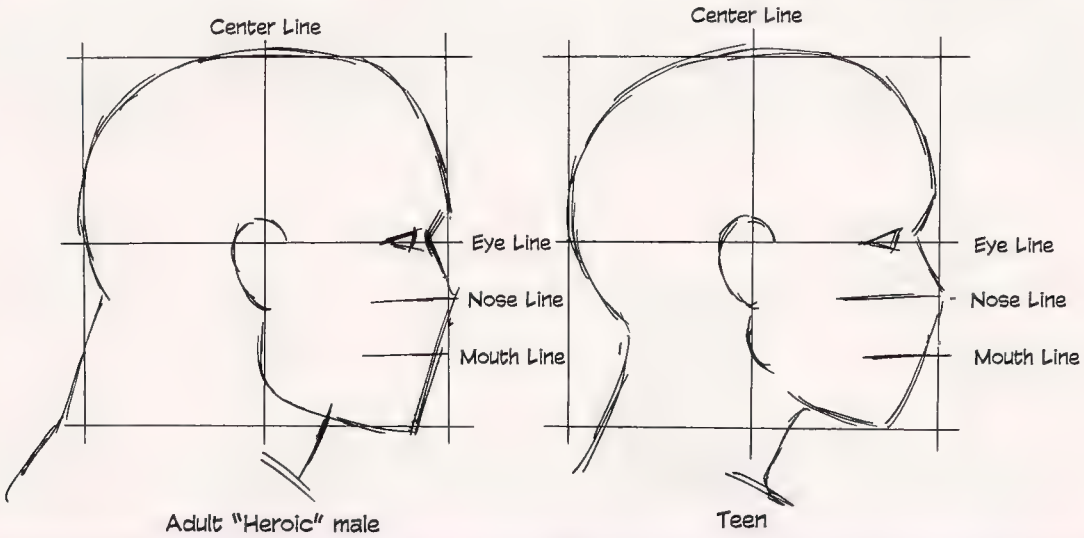
Drawing a convincing teen female is obviously trickier than the teen male, since her overall body proportions aren't markedly different from those of the adult heroic figure version, but there are a few things you can keep in mind. Whenever possible, try not too oversize the breasts—a smaller bustline will create a more youthful look. You can further enhance the character's youth by keeping her figure slimmer and less curvaceous.



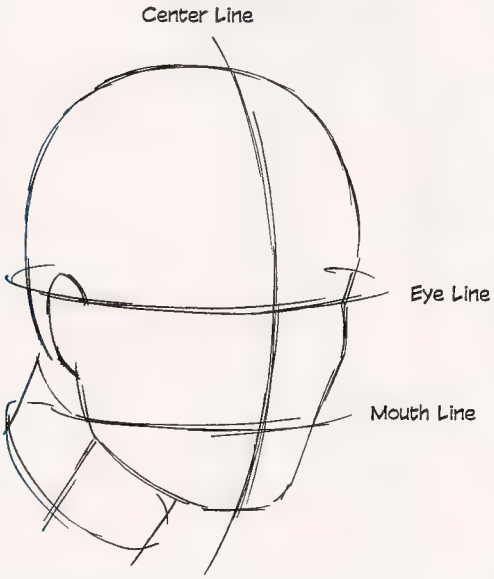
Face Facts

The head and face are a critical area of the teen figure. Here's where we really go to work on highlighting the youthful aspects of the character. Oddly enough, what we *leave out* of the drawing can often be as important as what we put in.

Let's start from the neck and work up, playing around with skull shapes. The human skull will basically fit within a square, and by dividing the square into four equal sections we end up with the eye line and a center line. These lines will help us place the features of the face.

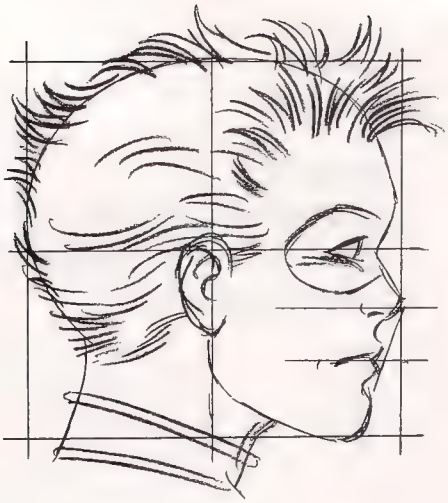


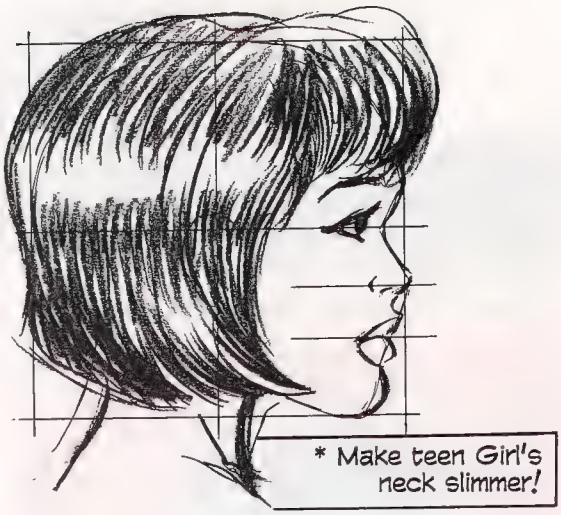
Let's work with these two skulls. The one on the left is a standard heroic male, and the other's a basic teen. The heroic male skull is nothing new: broad, muscular neck, angular features, prominent jaw. The teen skull, however, shows a slimmer neck and rounded profile. You might also notice that the slimmer neck line makes the back of the skull more pronounced. This little variation on the heroic male skull gives us not only a rough framework for drawing a teen male, but also teen and adult females, depending on the features we place upon it.



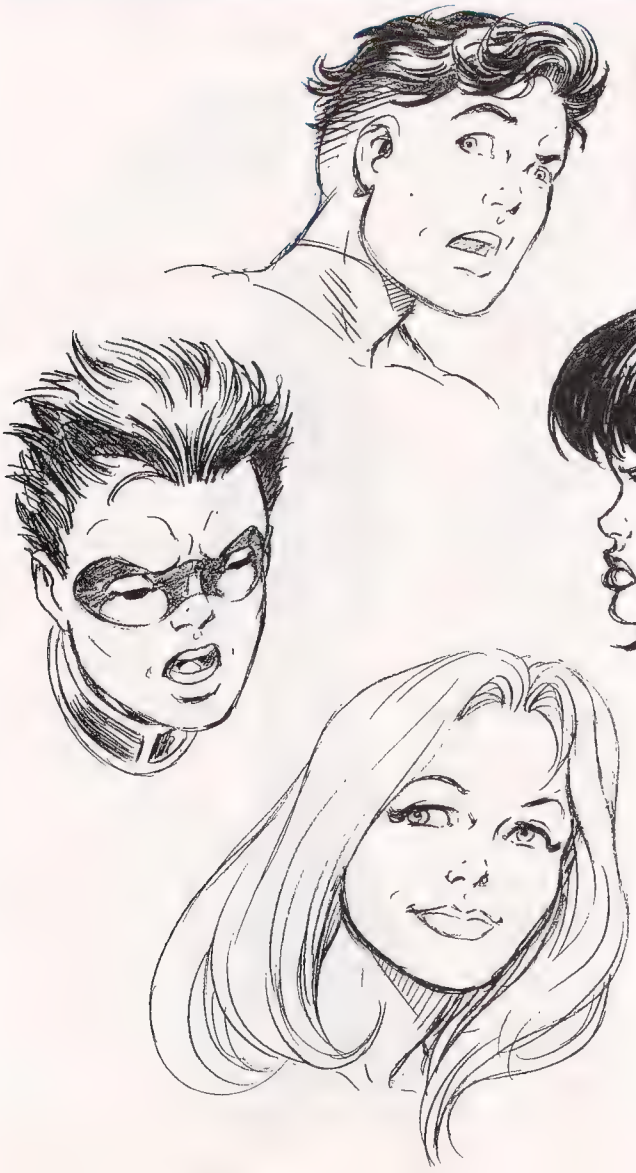
Now we'll work on the face itself. Let's use Superboy as an example, since he doesn't wear a mask or helmet or anything. We begin with the same skeletal framework we'd use to draw any figure, roughing in the placement of eyes, nose and mouth.

We then begin "fleshing out" the features as we would with an adult figure, keeping in mind we want to portray the character as young. Here it's important not to over-render the features. Lines tend to age a character's face, and over-rendering the contours of the face, particularly around the eyes and mouth, will soon make our character appear too old.





In addition, the few facial contours we *do* decide are necessary should look softer and more rounded. While a lantern jaw and furrowed brow make Batman look grim and heroic, they're out of place on a 14-year-old Robin. Simplifying and rounding out the face is the key to an adolescent look. Also, make note of Jubilee's slimmer neck, which helps to accentuate her feminine side.



Express Yourself

The true mark of a teenager, however, is exuberance and unrestrained emotion, which can be played out through various facial expressions. I often take the license of exaggerating these expressions (anger, surprise, amusement and so on) to help portray these emotions to a greater and sometimes comic effect. This is what I find most appealing about drawing teen superheroes—I can cut loose a little more without damaging the "heroic image" of a character.

Now that I've shown you the main points of drawing teen superheroes, it's likely that I've raised as many questions as I've answered. But the bottom line to drawing teen heroes (or anything else, for that matter) is to make the character *convincing* to your reader. This requires experimenting, bending some rules that you've been strictly following, and some tough self-criticism and evaluation of your work. I encourage you to keep practicing and to remember that drawing is work, but it's play too. So have fun! W

Tom Grummett used to draw cool teen books like Marvel's Generation X *and DC's* Robin *and* Superboy. *Now he's all grown up and gets to draw Superman in the pages of* Action Comics, *as well as April's Amalgam book* Challengers of the Fantastic. *And yes, he's still having fun.*

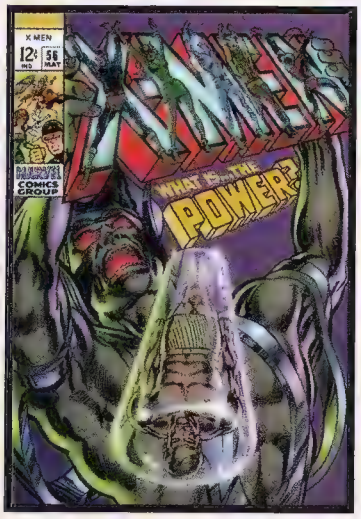
JUNK DRAWER

Little bits of everything in the world of comic-related merchandise

By David Borak and the *Wizard* Staff

TICK-LE ME BLUE

No, it's not one of those ridiculous Tickle Me Elmo dolls. (Don't ya just wanna grab those things and punt 'em?) It's actually a book containing everything you ever wanted to know about The Tick, but were afraid to ask! *The Tick: Mighty Blue Justice*, by Greg Hyland, is the completely authorized, thoroughly official, painstakingly compiled biography of The Tick (plus tons of other neat stuff)! You'll find sections on: "Advice to Aspiring Crime-fighters," "Tips on Choosing a Steadfast Sidekick" (like the ever-patient Arthur), and "Ways to Turn Your Apartment into a Boss Home Base." This softcover is available in April at bookstores everywhere for only $12. And remember, it's 100% evil-free!



THE UNSEEN X-MEN

In the late '60s and early '70s, Neal Adams did a brief run on Marvel Comics' *X-Men* which led to some groundbreaking issues. That tenure began with the cover to *X-Men* #56 drawn by Adams—artwork which *never* saw print, until now. According to Adams, Marvel felt the artwork obscured the logo and asked him to draw another cover. In May, WildStorm Fine Arts and Neal Adams will print the cover as a color high-quality Iris print. The huge (15" X 20") print will be printed on archival watercolor paper and is limited to 300 numbered copies, each of which is signed by Neal Adams. *The X-Men* #56 Iris Print goes for $150...a real steal for some fine art by an artist who inspired some of today's hottest comics stars.

SUPER T-SHIRTS

Trying to find that perfect look for comic book conventions? Search no further, as Graphitti Designs brings you the latest Superman T-shirt. Based on the black-and-silver costume worn in recent story arcs, the Superman Restoration T-shirt features a color variation of the classic Superman "S" symbol screen-printed on the front of a black, heavy-weight long-sleeve shirt. You can leap tall buildings in this shirt for just $23 ($26 for you XXL "super" sizes).

But wait, there's more! You can also find T-shirts featuring the classic symbols of Superman, Flash and Green Lantern (Hal Jordan, dammit!). The symbols are screen-printed on navy blue, red and forest green 100% cotton shirts, respectively. These cool shirts go for $15 each ($18 for XXL) and all are available in April.

MYSTIC MYSTIQUE

Sirius Comics launches a new line of quality resin kits and statues with a limited-edition, hand-painted, cold-cast statue of Queen Jatarri, the star of Dark One's hit series, *Animal Mystic*. Fully detailed, this figure was painstakingly crafted by renowned Japanese sculptor Susumu Sugita, based on a design by the Dark One himself. The statue comes packaged in a full-color box and is limited to only 1,000 figures. Look for it in May. Unfortunately, no

Queen Jatarri Statue

suggested retail price had been set at press time.

THE DARK KNIGHT RETURNS

If you can't get enough of Neal Adams' classic comic art stylings, check out *Batman: Turning Point—Circa 1970*, an all-new Adams rendering of the Dark Knight Detective commissioned by the Warner Bros. Studio Store. Limited to just 500 prints hand-signed by Adams himself, *Batman: Turning Point—Circa 1970* is an exclusive to Warner Bros. Studio Stores only and features the Caped Crusader in all his glory, hearkening back to the character's glory days when Adams and writer Denny O'Neil stripped away the cuteness of ol' Batman in favor of a "darker" approach that endures today. Each print comes with a price tag of $275 and is available at a Warner Bros. Studio Store near you.

Product of the Month

WE DON'T SERVE THEIR KIND HERE!

If you've never visited the Tatooine spaceport of Mos Eisley, the "wretched hive of scum and villainy" made famous in "Star Wars" (and even funkier with new critters and ships in the recent "Special Edition" clean-up of the film), now you can at least own a T-shirt that *says* you were there! The Mos Eisley Cantina Bar & Grill T-shirt features the logo of the well-known establishment on the front. It's available in L and XL sizes—naturally, sand-colored only—in April for $15.95 each. (Sorry, no Droids allowed.)

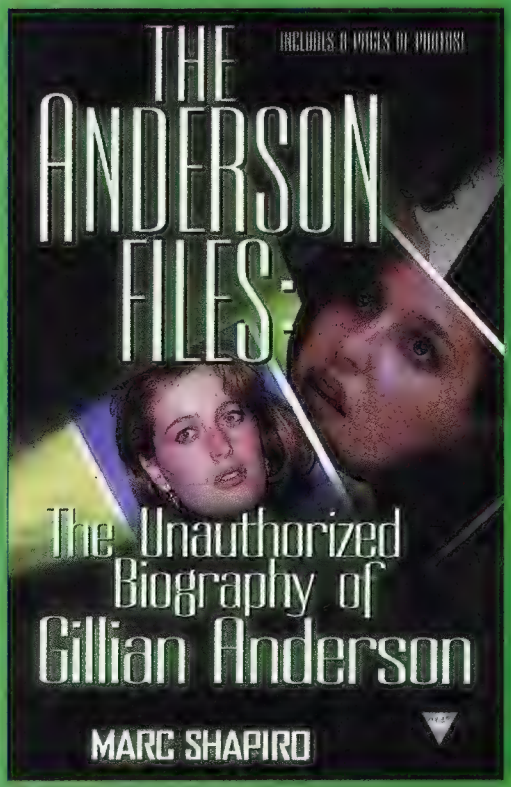
THE TRUTH IS IN HERE

Writer Marc Shapiro, frequent contributor to this here *Wizard* magazine, brings you the book that answers all the questions you have about everyone's favorite red-headed FBI agent, Gillian Anderson! *The Anderson Files* is the unauthorized biography of actress Gillian Anderson, Agent Dana Scully on TV's "The X-Files." From a struggling actress in New York to a young punk rocker in London to a working mother and TV superstar, Anderson has done it all. This 256-page paperback explains the history behind the woman worshipped like a goddess on the Internet with over 50 websites devoted to her! (Take that, Teri Hatcher.) The book, which includes eight pages of photos, is available at bookstores everywhere in April for just $5.99.

GAIMAN'S FAIR DEAL

First solicited in October 1996, Neil Gaiman and Dave McKean's delightfully illustrated book *The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish* is finally shipping from White Wolf. Reuniting the

Batman: Turning Point—Circa 1970



popular *Sandman* writer and cover artist respectively, Gaiman and McKean's *The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish* is written for children and the young at heart, telling the tale of a young boy who learns how difficult it can be to undo a swap after he trades his somewhat "boring" father for two goldfish. With 40 original illustrations by McKean accompanying Gaiman's charming and humorous text, *The Day I Swapped My Dad for Two Goldfish* arrives in hardback for just $21.99.

SNOWMAN BUNDLES UP

Entity Comics' horror sensation *Snowman* is brought to life in an all-new T-shirt depicting the macabre cover of *Snowman #2* with the title character posing next to a couple of frozen kids. Printed on 100% white cotton (naturally), the Snowman Tee comes in M, L and XL sizes for just $14.95 and ships in May. To order, just call Entity at 1-800-803-5755 and check out the company's website at **http:ourworld.compuserve.com/homepage/entitycomics**.

LEAN GREEN MACHINE

DC Comics continues its line of cool cold-cast porcelain statues with a representation of the newest Green Lantern, Kyle Rayner! Sculpted by William Paquet (Swamp Thing, Sandman Bookends) and based on designs by *Green Lantern* artist Darryl Banks, each statue is hand-painted and depicts Kyle in a funky pose, ready for some power ring action. This statue is limited to only 4,000 ring-slingin' pieces and should be available early this summer for $175. So start saving them pennies!

Green Lantern Statue

Check your local stores for availability of all these funky-fresh products. Or ask your friendly neighborhood comic store to special order 'em for ya!

HEY! Are you a company putting out some easy cheesin' good fun in the form of comic-related merchandise like Incredible Hulk Purple Dockers, The Dreaming Nytol or New Superman Static Guard? If so, we'd love to include 'em in our groovy "Junk Drawer" column. (Of course, we'd also like statues, T-shirts, novelties, magnets, etc.) Please send all info and sample products to:

Junk Drawer
151 Wells Ave.
Congers, NY 10920

JUNK DRAWER video games

By Steve Brown

'FORCE'-BASED GAMES LEAD THE SCI-FI VIDEO-GAME INVASION!

The twentieth anniversary of all things Star Wars has had a larger impact on today's pop culture than anyone could have ever predicted. The $36 million opening weekend for "Star Wars: The Special Edition" clearly illustrated this generation's love for science fiction done right. Thus, the sci-fi consumer's ravenous appetite for ancillary Star Wars products has been fueled, leading to scads of new action figures, collectibles, and yes, you guessed it, the inevitable video games. For the most part, Star Wars video-game adaptations of the past have been limited by the primitive hardware systems accompanying the times. However, today's golden age of virtual technology has helped bridge the gap between movie and video game. And as this month's column illustrates, the Force has some real tasty treats cooking up for Pentium-driven data banks.

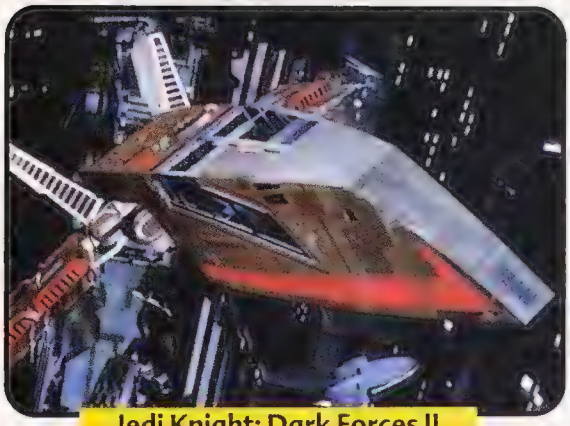
[EDITOR'S NOTE: The following synopses are previews of games not yet finished at press time.]

TITLE: *Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II*
MANUFACTURER: LucasArts for PC CD-ROM
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.99, available late March

Jedi Knight is a 3-D, first-person, action/adventure that will initially be available for Windows 95 and Macintosh CD-ROM platforms only. A Sony PlayStation version is probable, but will be released at a much later date.

Jedi Knight is an original spin-off epic that intentionally steers clear of many references to the "Star Wars" Trilogy, focusing instead on the hero from *Dark Forces*, Kyle Katarn, the mercenary who procured the Death Star plans from the Empire. Kyle undertakes a journey to discover the truth behind his father's death and inadvertently learns the ways of the Jedi. Players assume Kyle's own struggle against the evil Dark Side of the Force—in fact, at some point in the game, you can actually *choose* the Dark Side and see where it leads you. A combination of strategic game play with strong narrative and visuals, *Jedi Knight* incorporates a lot

Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II



Jedi Knight: Dark Forces II

of RPG elements and promises the ability to increase your character's skill level as the game progresses. You're required to navigate through 12 complex and detailed multi-level mazes and environments, face off against seven Dark Jedi and prevent them from unlocking the power of a hidden Jedi burial ground. The most powerful foe is Jerec, the deadly leader. Six diverse and dangerous Dark Jedi follow Jerec: Boc, cunning and brash, wields two lightsabers; Sariss, strong in both the physical and mental aspects of the Force; the bitter cripple Maw, whose contempt of human life forbids loyalty; Gorc and Pit, a symbiotic team-up of man and eight-foot monster; and Yun, the brash, ass-kissing newcomer. Lots of weapons are at your disposal: Stormtrooper pistols, thermal detonators, repeater guns, turrets and Imperial Machine mines. The coolest addition to your arsenal is the venerable Jedi accouterment, the lightsaber. Primarily a single-player game, *Jedi Knight*'s new network mode offers a multi-player/system experience. Players can battle it out in real time with up to eight different opponents in three different modes. Team Combat offers every-Jedi-for-himself combat or a capture-the-flag-type challenge. It sounds like an advanced game for the hardcore player. We'll let you know as soon as our finished copies arrive!

TITLE: *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*
MANUFACTURER: LucasArts for PC CD-ROM
SUGGESTED RETAIL: $49.99, available late March

X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter, a Star Wars multi-player space-combat simulation is first being released for the Windows 95 and Macintosh home computer systems. LucasArts is hoping for a late 1997/early 1998 PlayStation version, but it isn't currently scheduled. Featuring single-player mode or multi-player use, *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* allows up to eight players to team up as a squadron or compete against each other via modem or a local area network. In either mode, the game offers a choice of more than 15 original mission scenarios set in a variety of familiar Star Wars environments, ranging from asteroid and space junk fields to the Endor star system, where the Death Star II battle in "Return of the Jedi" was fought. Players will have more than a dozen Rebel, Imperial and Pirate starfighters at their disposal, which they can engage each other in assorted deep-space dogfights. In the multi-player/network mode, players determine whether they want to fly for the Rebellion or serve the Empire. After choosing a flight group of starfighters, you're briefed and provided with objectives and role descriptions, and allowed to communicate with squad mates to discuss battle tactics. 3-D in-flight maps are available in real time to assist players in determining mission strategy, as well as providing rendezvous points. Once engaged in battle, players can assume the controls of a single starfighter or multiple craft. Squadrons are controlled by issuing tactical orders either through the 3-D map or a series of keyboard commands. Missions in *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter* have been specially designed to promote cooperation between squad mates, allowing pilots to both send *and* receive messages to wingmates or enemy pilots. *X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter*'s game engine uses new texture-mapped models, with ship details taken directly from the Star Wars archives at Lucasfilm. Though the game appears to be a glorified version of the classic Atari 2600 *Combat*, let's hope that the focus of this game is on basic playability and not anally minute details and flight simulator-type *non-action*.

X-Wing vs. TIE Fighter

THE TOY CHEST

BY **SCOTT BEATTY**

TOY FAIR 1997

We came. We saw. We broke two elevators. This past February, the staffs of *Wizard* and the upcoming monthly ***ToyFare*** magazine (you betcha…MONTHLY, beginning this July!!!) made their way into the Big Apple for the **1997 International Toy Fair**, the show of shows, where all the major toy manufacturers spotlight their upcoming wares for buyers and the press. By our estimation, this has got to be the biggest year for action figures…EVER. You name it—superheroes, monsters, mutants, Jedi—if it can be sculpted into plastic, it's coming out this year! After several days making the rounds of the various showrooms, **"Toy Chest"** proudly brings you the best of the best in 1997…even if we had to get trapped in two elevators to bring 'em to you:

AMERICAN INTERNATIO
TOY FAI
A TMA EVENT
SCOTT BEATTY
WIZARD PRESS
PRESS

KENNER

Star Wars: Power of the Force

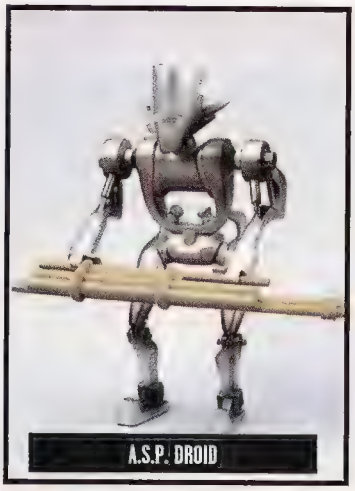
The number one boys' toy in 1996 steamrolls into 1997 with the force of the "Star Wars Trilogy Special Edition" behind it. With Star Wars popularity at its highest, Kenner unveiled perhaps its best lineup since the line's debut!

New action figures this year include **Garindan (Imperial Spy)**, **Grand Moff Tarkin**, **Admiral Ackbar**, "Star Wars: The Special Edition" newcomer **A.S.P. Droid**, **Gamorrean Guard** and *Wizard*'s "Wish List" dream girl… **Enslaved Princess Leia**!

GARINDAN (IMPERIAL SPY)

GRAND MOFF TARKIN

ADMIRAL ACKBAR


A.S.P. DROID

GAMORREAN GUARD

ENSLAVED PRINCESS LEIA

Other figures definitely slated for '97 are **Emperor's Imperial Guard**, **4-LOM**, **Blockade Runner Soldier**, **Dengar**, **Luke Skywalker in Ceremonial Outfit**, **Ponda Baba** (Walrus Man), **Snowtrooper**, **Weequay**, **Nien Nunb**, a POTF re-release of Princess Leia in Boushh Disguise, **Rancor Keeper**, **Yak Face** and the **9D-9 Droid**.

New Deluxe Figures this year will include the **Hoth Rebel Soldier** with Anti-Vehicle Laser Gun and **Snowtrooper** with E-Web Heavy Repeating Blaster.

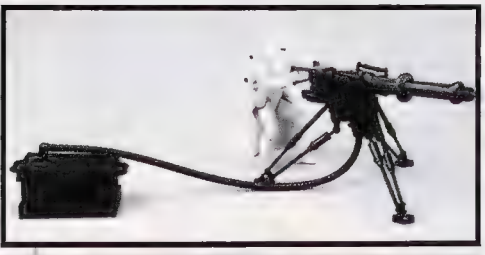
In the **Star Wars Beast Assortment with Action Figures**, expect the "Special Edition"-debuted **Ronto** w/ Jawa and a **Tauntaun** w/Luke Skywalker in Hoth Gear. [Note: all Beast Assortment figures are all-new sculpts for each.]

Luke Skywalker Jedi Knight and **Emperor Palpatine** will be added to the Electronic Power F/X Assortment (with remote action light-up LED lightsaber and lightning-strike energy bolts, respectively).

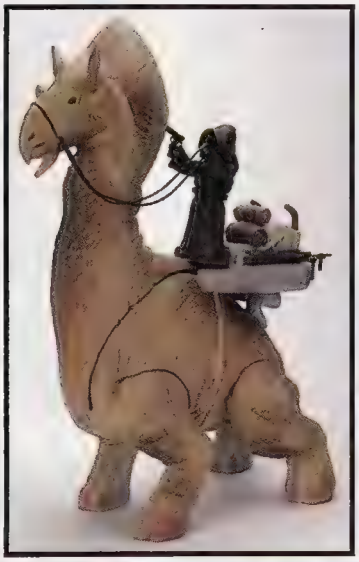
Meanwhile, new vehicles in 1997 will include **Princess Leia Organa in Endor Gear** w/ Imperial Speeder Bike, the mammoth Electronic AT-AT Walker Playset w/ exclusive **AT-AT Driver** and **AT-AT Commander** figures, and the **Rebel A-Wing Fighter** w/ exclusive Pilot figure.

Playsets added to the lineup include the "Empire"-based **Hoth Snow Battle** and the "Jedi"-inspired Endor Ambush Bunker.

And finally, Kenner adds a ***Millennium Falcon* Carry Case** to hold all your action figures, including the brand-spankin' new **Wedge Antilles** figure that comes exclusive with the case!



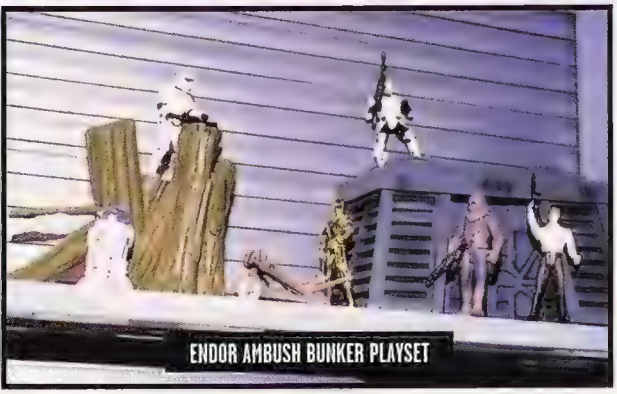
PRINCESS LEIA ORGANA IN ENDOR GEAR W/ SPEEDER BIKE



(TOP, FAR LEFT): SNOWTROOPER WITH E-WEB HEAVY REPEATING BLASTER
(LEFT): RONTO WITH JAWA
(ABOVE): ELECTRONIC POWER F/X LUKE SKYWALKER JEDI KNIGHT

ELECTRONIC AT-AT WALKER PLAYSET WITH AT-AT DRIVER AND AT-AT COMMANDER

LUKE'S T-16 SKYHOPPER, VADER'S TIE-FIGHTER AND THE NEW A-WING FIGHTER



ENDOR AMBUSH BUNKER PLAYSET

HOTH SNOW BATTLE PLAYSET

Don't tell Batman! Chuck Dixon cozies up to Poison Ivy

NOTES FROM THE BATCAVE by Chuck Dixon

Okay, I love everything Batman. I write three Bat-titles for DC Comics (*Detective Comics*, *Robin* and *Nightwing*) and I'm an unrepentant toy geek. So when *Wizard* asked me to review the new Bat-toys on display at Toy Fair '97, I realized why I'd been placed on this planet.

The Batcave was the last stop on the Kenner tour back in February and was the definite highlight for me. First came the toys related to **"Batman and Robin,"** the latest entry in the ongoing movie series. I was ecstatic to see two **Bane** action figures. One is a standard Bane looking exactly like his four-color counterpart and the other is an armored version to be included in a two-pack with a silver-armored Batman [Battle of Brain vs. Brawn two-pack]. I can't tell you what a kick it is to see a character I helped create turned into four different action figures. There's even an itty-bitty-teensy-tiny Bane in the Batman and Robin Microverse set!

Poison Ivy and **Mr. Freeze** look less like the comic versions than I had expected. Sorry, guys—Ivy doesn't bear much resemblance to Uma Thurman either. I saw two new **Batgirl** figures and a related ice-vehicle [Ice Strike Cycle] that looked impressive. The new **Batmobile** is more streamlined with electronic goodies. The sharpest new vehicle is the Iceglow Bathammer Batmobile, a kind of Batwing on steroids, with built-in strobing lights that flash in sequence as the gizmo is pushed across the floor.

In the next showroom were new **Legends of the Dark Knight** and Animated Series D.U.O. Force figures. The biggest news is a long-anticipated **Harley Quinn** that even Paul Dini will be happy with. There's a new **Joker** in wide-brim hat and duster, a Batgirl [Wind Blitz Batgirl] in a kind of scuba costume and some new Batman and Robin variations. In the Legends line is a new **Laughing Gas Joker**, but unfortunately, someone stole the prototype the day before. The thief should be wearin' a batarang where the sun don't shine. And I thought the crime rate had *dropped* in the Big Apple!

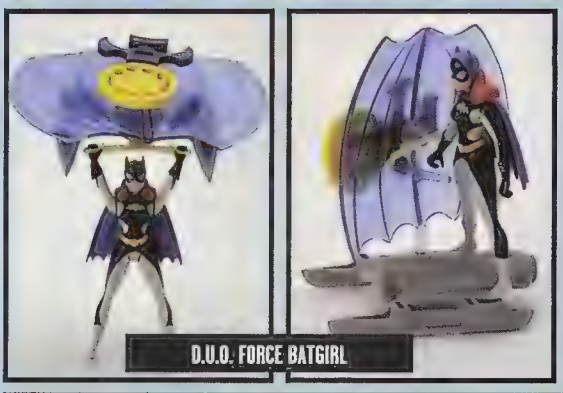
The final room was turned over to the **Total Justice** line. The big surprise for me was a **Green Arrow** figure that looks just like Connor Hawke—down to skin tone and hair color—and he's in a great bow-shootin' action pose.

There's also a **Huntress** in her most-recent costume with crossbow, flowing black hair and bad-attitude facial expression. This was an odd choice for the line considering there's still no Wonder Woman on the horizon. But I was very pleased to see an action figure of a character I've written so many stories for. Finally, **Parallax** and **Black Lightning** rounded out the new TJ figures.

So, there's impressive stuff in the future for fans of toys based on Batman and the rest of the DC Universe. Personally, I have only one problem with the new lines:

Where am I gonna PUT all this crap? •

All-around good guy Chuck Dixon, in addition to writing three Bat-titles, also writes the monthly adventures of Green Arrow, *'cause he's a little partial to that Connor Hawke feller.*


D.U.O. FORCE BATGIRL

LAUGHING GAS JOKER

PARALLAX

HUNTRESS

GREEN ARROW

BLACK LIGHTNING

TOY BIZ

Toy Biz heads into one of its biggest years with several new assortments devoted to the X-Men, Spider-Man and the Incredible Hulk franchises, as well as an all-new concept called **Famous Covers**, eight-inch action figures modeled after the much-missed Mego dolls of the '70s with super-articulation and real cloth costumes. Each figure is modeled after the first appearances of various Marvel Comics' characters and comes in its own box reprinting the classic cover! Though final photography on these beautiful figures was unavailable at press time, expect the following assortment to kick off what is sure to be the superhero collectible hits of 1997: **Dr. Doom**, **Spider-Man**, **Green Goblin**, **Aunt May** (yup, no joke), **Storm** (*a la* Dave Cockrum) and **Wolverine** (blue-and-yellow costume).

But that's just the tip of the iceberg for Toy Biz in '97!

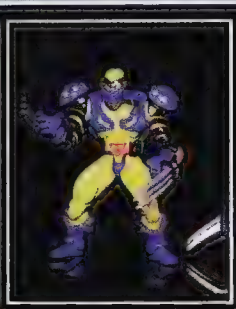
SILVER SURFER With an all-new animated series to debut this fall, Norrin Radd, the former herald of Galactus, headlines his own action-figure assortment, which may include **Ego the Living Planet** somewhere down the line! (From left): **Silver Surfer**, **Nova**, **Beta Ray Bill** and **Meegan Alien** (an alien from the original *Silver Surfer* series...how's that for a No-Prize?).

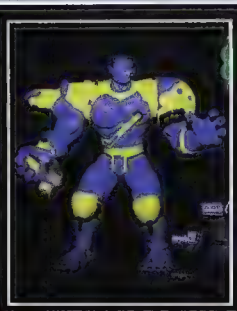
CLASSIC X-MEN COLLECTOR'S GIFT SET Straight out of *Wizard*'s "Wish List," comes this beautiful boxed set collection of the **Classic X-Men**...and it's about time! (From left): **Cyclops**, **Beast**, **Angel**, **Iceman** and **Marvel Girl**. Whoo-hoo!

X-MEN: SAVAGE LAND Marvel's favorite mutants head to the Savage Land with two-packs depicting SL versions of the team members and assorted dinos, as well as Biz's first-ever Joseph and Ka-Zar figures! (Clockwise from top left): **Mutant Wolverine w/ Crawler Rex**, **Storm w/ Colossus Triceratops**, **Joseph w/ Amphibius**, **Ka-Zar w/ Zabu** and **Angel** (feathered!) **w/ Sauron Pterodactyl**.

AVENGERS: LEGENDS OF POWER This long-awaited assortment features some very nicely sculpted versions of the classic characters, plus one decidedly "current" reborn hero. (Top): **"Heroes Reborn" Iron Man** and the **Scarlet Witch**. (Bottom): **Loki** and **The Mighty Thor**.

X-MEN: MISSILE FLYERS Another 1997 X-Men assortment features action figures with clip-on wings and projectiles. Check out the nifty new Bishop figure with his sister Shard! (From left): **Bishop**, **Shard** and **Mutant Virus Cable** (from "Onslaught"). Not pictured: **Future Wolverine** and **Apocalypse.**

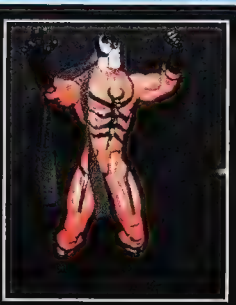
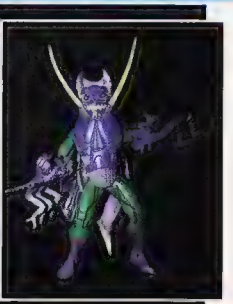




X-MEN: STAR RIDERS Comic artist **Dave Johnson** contributed the designs for these space-faring X-Men, each with their own modular ship, which—when combined—link up to form one mammoth space cruiser! (From left): **Professor X, Jean Grey, Wolverine, Cyclops** and **Beast.**

X-MEN: ONSLAUGHT Last, but by no means least, comes 1997's most-eagerly awaited assortment, the "Wish List" perennial "Onslaught" collection, featuring the no-good villain himself! All but Onslaught come with a smaller non-articulated character...pretty keen, huh? (From left): **Onslaught w/ armor, Apocalypse Rising w/ Ozymandias, Jean Grey (w/ Juggernaut trapped in the Ruby of Cyttorak), Wolverine Unleashed w/Franklin Richards** and **Onslaught** sans armor.

SPIDER-MAN: WEB WARS Spidey's 1997 assortments kick off with action figures' features that connect to make li'l battle robots! (From left): **Web Commando Spidey, Web Swamp Spidey, Vulture, The Lizard** and an all-new **Daredevil!** (Yeah, baby!)

SPIDER MAN: SPIDER FORCE
For the die-hard Spider-Fans, the Biz's new Spider-Force assortment features characters you probably thought you'd never ever see! (Top, left to right): **Wasp, Tarantula, Beetle.** (Bottom, left to right): **Swarm** (yes, Swarm!!!) and **Cybersect Spider-Man.**

SPIDER-MAN: WEB TRAP
New versions of classic Spidey-villains and perhaps the best Spidey body yet highlight this assortment! (Top, left to right): **Rhino** and **Monster-Spider-Man.** (Bottom, left to right): **New Spider-Man, Future-Spider-Man** and **Scorpion.**

VENOM: ALONG CAME A SPIDER And the year wouldn't be complete without an all-new assortment devoted to that nasty symbiote Venom...and here 'tis. (Clockwise from top left): **Venom the Symbiote**, **Spider-Carnage**, **Phage** and **The Bride of Venom**.

THE INCREDIBLE HULK: TRANSFORMATIONS
In the six-inch Hulk line comes nifty-sweet renditions of some recent (and not so recent) Marvel Comics classics. (Clockwise, from top left): **Smart Hulk**, **Maestro**, **Hulk 2099** and the **Absorbing Man**.

THE INCREDIBLE HULK SMASH AND CRASH/OUTCASTS Meanwhile, in the animated series-inspired five-inch assortments, Toy Biz maintains the size of the characters as constant, but beefs up the detailing. (Clockwise from top left): **Leader-Hulk (w/ Gargoyle)**, **Animated Hulk Three**, **The Leader**, **Zzzax**, **Wendigo**, **Two-Head** and **Chainsaw**. Not pictured: **Doc Samson**.

MCFARLANE TOYS

Todd McFarlane's toy company goes for the throat in 1997 with monsters galore—action figures based on the upcoming "**Spawn**" feature film, more Total Chaos creatures and perhaps the strangest toys of all...action figures based on the classic rock band **KISS**!

SPAWN: THE MOVIE (DELUXE BOXED ASSORTMENT) July will see the debut of these deluxe monster mommas. (From left): **Spawn** (w/snap-on blades, hands and other accessories), **Violator** (w/ extending jaw, giant attaching horn and light-up eyes) and **Malebolgia** (w/ sound chip and skull staff accessory).

SPAWN: THE MOVIE With ILM special effects and a cast that includes Michael Jai White (Al Simmons/Spawn), Martin Sheen (Jason Wynn) and John Leguizamo (The Clown), the "**Spawn**" feature film'll surely light up the summer box office. And McFarlane Toys' June-released action figures based on the actors' likenesses are sure to leap off toy shelves. (Top, from left): **Regular Spawn**, **Hamburger Spawn**, **Priest** (think Chapel...but much cuter). (Bottom, from left): **Jason Wynn**, **Al Simmons** and the **Clown**!

SPAWN SERIES 8 Regular series **Spawn** figures, available this May, include what may be the weirdest assortment yet for Spawnie-Guy! (From left): **Curse of the Spawn** (based on the hit new comic series), **Rotarr**, **Renegade**, **Buffalo**, **Gate Keeper** and **Grave Digger**.

TOTAL CHAOS: SERIES 2 August sees the release of a brand-new **Total Chaos** assortment, action figures based on Todd McFarlane's own wild imagination! (From left): **Corn Boy** (don't ask), **Smuggler**, **Quartz**, **Poacher**, **Blitz** and **Brain Drain**.

KISS

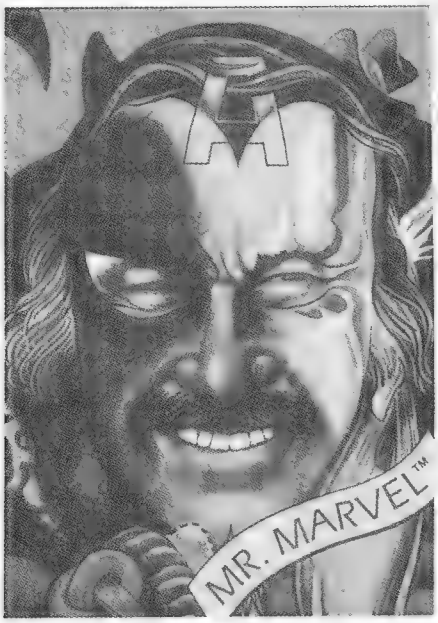
But the best, by far, has got to be McFarlane Toys' action figures based on **KISS**! Yes, KISS...with blazing guitars and Kabuki makeup! Licensed by the band itself, KISS action figures debut this June...so be afraid, parents...be very, very afraid! Each classic KISS member comes with his respective instrument, snap-on attachments, weapons (yup, just like in concert) and rooted hair. (From left): **Gene Simmons** (tongue not to scale), **Peter Criss**, **Paul Stanley** and **Ace Frehley**. Now, if McFarlane can just insert sound chips that play "Black Diamond" or "Strutter," we'd be set.

Our Toy Fair '97 coverage continues in the ***ToyFare Spring Special*** (on sale in April) and next month in *Wizard* #70! Be on the lookout for the total lowdown on Kenner's "**Batman & Robin**" and "**Steel**" action figures, based on the upcoming summer DC Comics movies, as well as a look at Galoob's new Star Wars-based Micro Machines. **W**

Wizard staffer Scott Beatty would like to thank his fellow elevator-trapped Toy Fair attendees for using strong deodorant.

DALLAS COLLECTORS CONVENTIONS
PROUDLY PRESENTS

STAN LEE
CREATOR OF THE MARVEL UNIVERSE



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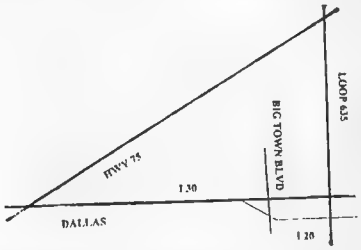

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THIS OFFER EXPIRES JUNE 16, 1997.

HOMEMADE HEROES

THE ARENA FOR FAN-MADE ACTION FIGURES.

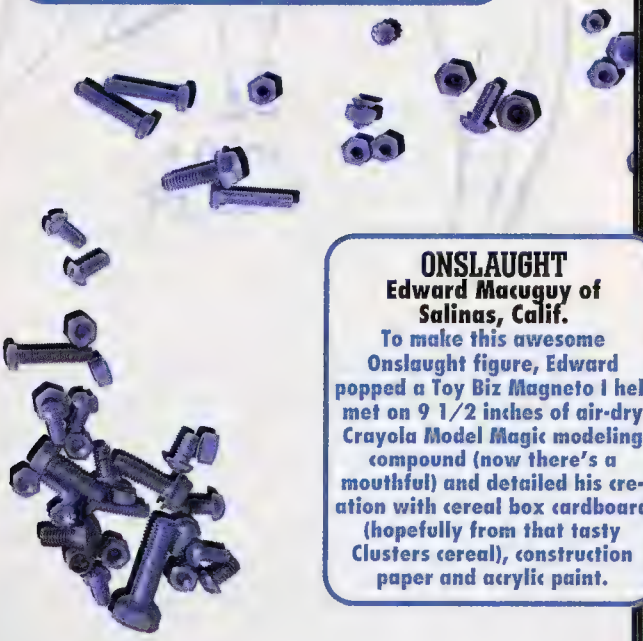
GRAND PRIZE

THE CLOWN
Ricardo Roman Vazquez of Mayaguez, Puerto Rico
Would you believe this sinister-looking Clown was created from four pounds of sculpting putty? FOUR POUNDS! Adding a bit of acrylic paint, Ricardo touched up this realistic Spawny villain to make a four-pound whopper of a figure.

All of the following figures were made from plain old, ordinary figures and household materials, and each of these truly talented creators will receive a Palisades Marketing Ash action figure and a special variant Ash action figure. The Runner-Up will also get an issue of *Ash* signed by Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti, and the Grand Prize Winner blasts off with all that stuff plus a box of the Dynamic Forces Ash card set! Outstanding work, folks!

Thanks a bunch to the Palisades Marketing people for the awesome prizes!

RUNNER-UP



ONSLAUGHT
Edward Macuguy of Salinas, Calif.
To make this awesome Onslaught figure, Edward popped a Toy Biz Magneto I helmet on 9 1/2 inches of air-dry Crayola Model Magic modeling compound (now there's a mouthful) and detailed his creation with cereal box cardboard (hopefully from that tasty Clusters cereal), construction paper and acrylic paint.

CAPTAIN MARVEL
Gary House of St. Louis, Mo.
"Shazam!" In a blinding flash of light, this Captain Marvel figure zapped into existence out of an animated Capture Net Superman, some putty and a bit of yellow thread.

DARTH VADER (WITH REMOVABLE HELMET)
Jayson Tillapaugh of Richfield Springs, N.Y.
How cool is this handless Vader figure, made from a Kenner POTF Darth Vader body and a repainted G.I. Joe head?

FOUNDING AVENGERS
Eric Dlugokinski of Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
Eric repainted some Hercules figures to make Thor, Ant-Man and Loki, and also repainted a few Toy Biz figures to make the Hulk, Iron Man and the Wasp.

J. JONAH JAMESON & SPIDEY
Tom Lotz of Naples, Fla.
Watch out, Tiger Woods! J. Jonah Jameson—made of a Toy Biz Chameleon head and a Starting Line-Up Arnold Palmer body—tees off with a Spidey head. FORE!!!

HEY!

If you're interested in entering the homemade figure contest, send well-lit, clear, color photographs (No Polaroids, and put 'em in a cool or funny pose!), along with your name, address, description of how you created your figure, and your full phone number (including area code) to:

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a look at some cool stuff with an alternative twist

Juvenile Delinquent

With *Paradise Sucks*, James Kochalka continues to explore his childhood

Cartoonist James Kochalka refuses to grow up. But why would he want to? The multitalented comic book creator of Magic Boy is a fine artist who has had several gallery showings. He's a magazine illustrator published in places like *Pulse* and Seattle's *Stranger*. He's the lead singer for the band appropriately named James Kochalka Superstar. He's a waiter at a local Chinese restaurant. (Love them leftovers!) And he also manages to find time to crank out some damn fine mini-comics and graphic novels in between all of that other stuff. So why give that all up and face adulthood?

Since Kochalka has his finger in so many things at once, you might wonder why he sticks with comics. For the 29-year-old Vermont resident, the answer is pretty simple: "Comics are really personal. You make a comic and then you can send it out all across the country and have a direct connection between you and whoever reads the thing, as opposed to painting, where chances are your painting's not going to go all over the world and people aren't going to see it."

It's easy for Kochalka to have an instant rapport with his readers, because his cartooning style is instantly likable and personable. Even though he sometimes tackles some heavy issues like religion and maturation in his work, he draws in a simple thick-lined style and populates his comics with goofy characters (like talking squirrels, robot elves and green aliens that pee on people) that help keep his strips fun and interesting. "I'm always trying to get at some deeper meaning about existence in my comics, but I enjoy life and I have lot of fun in my own life, so I want to get at these deeper issues in a fun way. I don't want people to be bored reading my comics."

It's almost impossible to be bored reading Kochalka's books. Take his latest project, for example. It's a graphic novel called *Paradise Sucks*, and it features two distinct stories that intersect at various points. Kochalka's sometimes stand-in, Magic Boy, stars in one of the stories as a geometric painter struggling to find the spark of creativity in his work that he's long since lost. The other half of the story is Kochalka's distinctive take on the creation story with Adam and Eve. "You get a little bit of one story and a little bit of another, [going] back and forth for a while until eventually they merge into one story."

Even though he's trying to reach a lot of people with his art—which is usually very cartoony and therefore highly accessible—some might be a little put off by the fact that Kochalka pays so much attention to himself. His mini-comic series and band are both named James Kochalka Superstar, and a recent comic featured his photo on the cover instead of regular artwork. But you have to realize that it's all part of the fun and also part of Kochalka's grand scheme. "I've always felt that I should be famous just for being me, not for anything I've done or anything I've created," he says.

Kochalka rationalizes this idea by recalling the way he was taught in school. "When I was a kid, teachers started praising kids just for their individuality. We all grew up thinking that [we] were special. Whether you're special or not, everyone thinks they're special, so you start to think that everyone else is *not* special. You think, 'Everyone can't be special, so if I'm special, that means the other people *can't possibly* be special.' Then you walk around looking at other people, thinking what idiots they are."

It's no mistake that Kochalka looks to his childhood to explain the way he lives his life as an adult. In fact, the process of growing up is the basis for just about all of Kochalka's comics. Magic Boy, the main character in the majority of Kochalka's stories, is a young buck-toothed elf that usually finds himself in

Above left: *James Kochalka Superstar*, the compact disc
Below: Meet Magic Boy, Kochalka's major player

by tom palmer jr.

Above: Magic Boy "gets lucky," but only in his dreams. Right: However, Magic Boy isn't too hot at greeting Alien visitors.

all sorts of teenage mischief like drinking beer in the woods, torturing defenseless insects and skinny-dipping.

The change from child to adult is a subject that Kochalka finds endlessly fascinating. "I'm still trying to figure out how in the hell I grew up, because I promised myself I would never grow up when I was a little kid, but it happened anyway. I think I held on pretty well to childhood, to the awe and wonder, but there are definitely ways that I've changed. I'm just trying to think about the process. You start out formless and then eventually you learn more and more about the world, and it changes you; you become a person. That process of becoming a person is really interesting to me."

Even though Kochalka swore he would never grow up, he admits there are a few good things about being a grown-up. "I think it was a great decision to grow up, but [you should] try to hold onto some things about being a kid, because there's a lot of power in being an adult. You have the power to control your life. Many of my friends will tell you that I'm really immature and barely an adult at all, but I support myself and make a living. I do fine as an adult. I think working and making a living is a good feeling in a way, to know that you can actually make it in the world in some way."

The one thing Tom Palmer Jr. misses about being a kid is wearing a diaper. He can't wait until he gets really old and can wear one again. Yup, that'll be damn fine.

FYI

If you want to join the legion of James Kochalka fans, you can start by picking up *Paradise Sucks*, which was released in February from Black Eye Productions, 353 Parc Ave. #5, Montreal, Quebec, Canada H2V 4G3 (also be on the lookout for *Magic Boy Does Laundry*, coming soon from Black Eye). Kochalka's earlier comics, *Little Mister Man* and *Magic Boy and the Robot Elf*, were published by Slave Labor Graphics, 979 S. Bascom Ave., San Jose, CA 95128. Kochalka frequently publishes mini-comics and graphic novels, like *Magic Boy and the Word of God* and *The Perfect Planet*, so you can write to him directly at P.O. Box 8321, Burlington, VT 05402. And if you *really* want the full James Kochalka experience, you can pick up his compact disc, *James Kochalka Superstar*, from Dot Dot Dash, P.O. Box 1971, New York, NY 10009.

James Kochalka's Recommended Reading

"I loved *It's A Good Life, If You Don't Weaken* by Seth. I really like *The Sands* by Tom Hart, *Young Bug* by Michael Kenny, *Silly Daddy* by Joe Chiappetta, *King of Persia* by Walt Holcombe, *THB* by Paul Pope and *The Big Yum Yum Book* by Robert Crumb. There are so many good comics that I feel like I should plug all my cartoon pals' comics, but I can't even think of them all. I really like *King Cat*, the mini-comic by John Porcellino. I think that's one of the best comics anyone can hope to find anywhere. It expresses the natural beauty of the world in a profound and simple way."

Recommended Reading

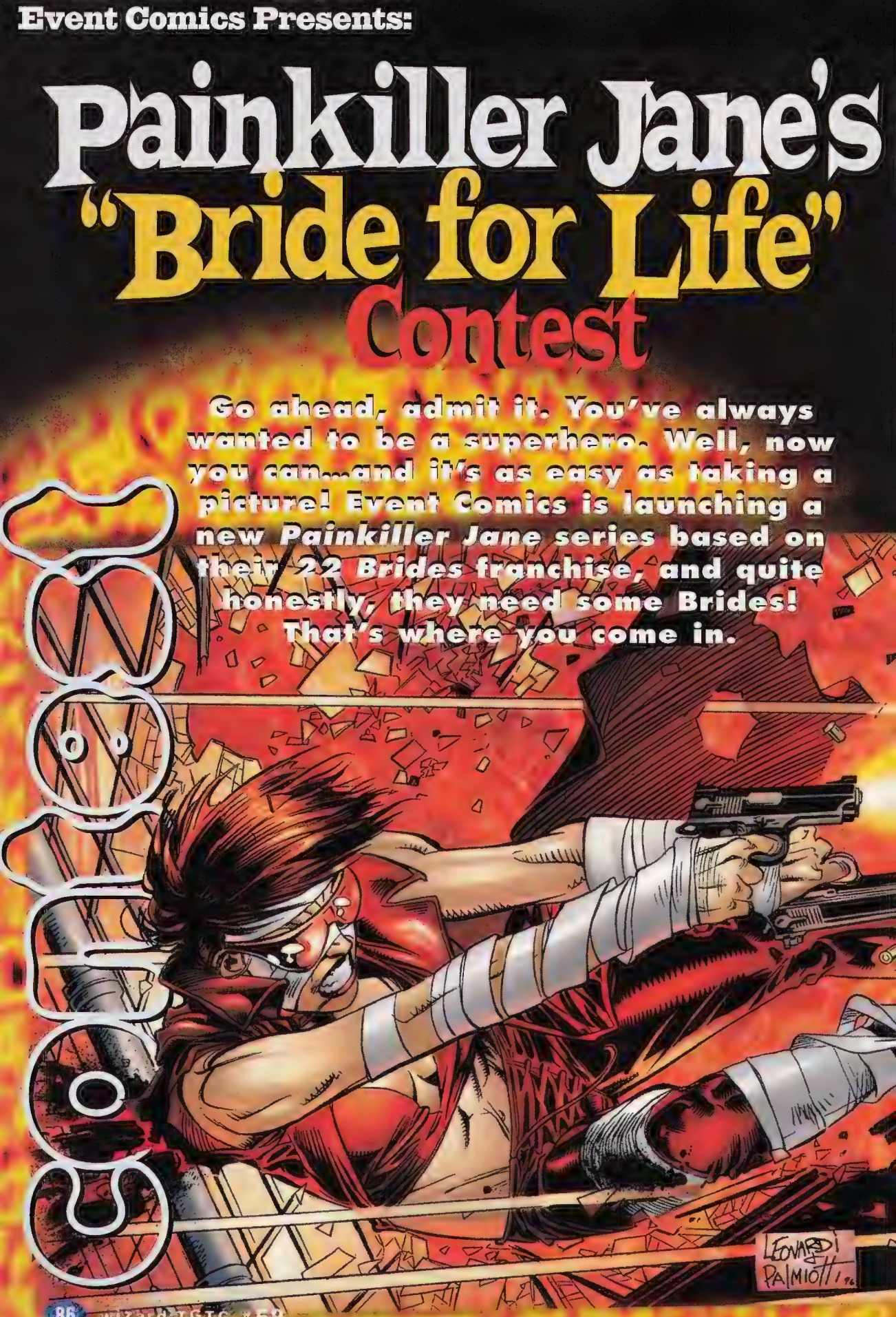
The Revival This Xeric Foundation-funded title is one of the few comics that truly utilizes the comics medium in a new and exciting way. Creator James Sturm tells "an accurate account of religious life in early America" in this short, unassuming comic. Sturm's talent lies in his ability to tell his story without resorting to sensationalism or distracting techniques. This comic is an understated masterpiece. If you can't find a copy at your local comic shop, you can write to the author/publisher directly at: Bear Bones Press, 214 Harvard Ave, Swarthmore, PA 19801.

The King of Persia This short graphic novel has much to offer. Cartoonist Walt Holcombe (another Xeric grant recipient) has crafted a story that warrants several readings to pick up on all the subtle nuances of the story. On the surface, this just seems to be a simple tale about a lonely king and his attempt to find true love. But Holcombe is able to coax true emotion and sentiment from his cartoony characters. This is a fascinating comic that is only enhanced by Holcombe's expertly rendered artwork. For more information, write to the author at: Accordion Press, P.O. Box 49751, Austin, TX 78765.

Event Comics Presents:

Painkiller Jane's "Bride for Life" Contest

Go ahead, admit it. You've always wanted to be a superhero. Well, now you can...and it's as easy as taking a picture! Event Comics is launching a new *Painkiller Jane* series based on their *22 Brides* franchise, and quite honestly, they need some Brides! That's where you come in.



Here's the skinny on playing this wacky contest:

To become a perpetual bride, simply mail in a photo of yourself (females only, please) dressed as a potential *22 Brides* character. Prizes will be awarded based on quality, creativity, and originality. And though men are prohibited from posing for these lovely pics and winning the Grand Prize, you're still entitled to Second and Third Prizes by entering into our random drawing. And please, guys, we strongly encourage you to persuade girlfriends, sisters, grandmothers, moms, etc. to dress up and win! Heck, if mega-talented artist Amanda Conner can dress up and pose (see photo), we know you can!

Grand Prize (1): Believe it or not, one reader will receive her likeness written and drawn into a future issue of *Painkiller Jane*!, Not only that, but this lucky girl also gets to have her persona used in perpetuity as part of the *22 Brides* franchise! And if all that ain't enough, the Grand Prize winner will additionally receive a page of Rick Leonardi original art depicting her character! Whew! (All this providing we receive a perpetual name and likeness release—a minor legal matter.)

Second Prize (15): Fifteen lucky readers will each receive a copy of *Painkiller Jane* #1 autographed by Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn and Rick Leonardi.

Third Prize (25): Twenty-five somewhat lucky readers will each receive a 22 Brides promo poster autographed by Joe Quesada and Jimmy Palmiotti.

Fill this sucker out, put it in an envelope and send it to: Painkiller Jane's "Bride For Life" Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline for the contest is May 30, 1997.

This contest is sponsored by Event Comics, a real neato bunch of talented people.

Legal Vows

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, Event Comics, their immediate families and any chicks that are really guys. Don't mess with our heads like that. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card and attach to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: Painkiller Jane's "Bride For Life" Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up this cool magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. We're serious about that cross-dressing thing. If you pee standing up, don't enter. All entries must be received at contest headquarters by May 30, 1997. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected based on quality and creativity from among all properly completed entries by Wizard Press. Drawing will take place on June 16, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after June 16, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: Painkiller Jane's "Bride For Life" Contest Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Bride for Life
Entry Form

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (don't fergit dat area code!) _____

Distinguishing birthmarks, scars, tattoos, etc. _____

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KROME PRODUCTIONS

THE SKINNY

Comic book REVIEWS from the *Wizard* Editors

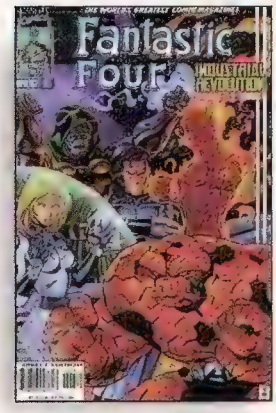
THE SCORING

6 THE BEST · 5 EXCELLENT · 4 GOOD · 3 SO-SO · 2 UGH · 1 CRAPOLA

FANTASTIC FOUR

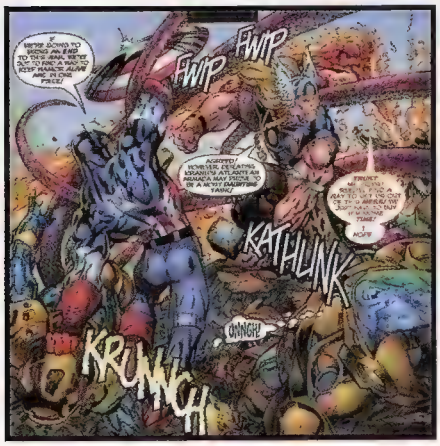
Fantastic formula at high speed

Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Marvel Comics
Creative team: Jim Lee, Brandon Choi, Scott Williams & JD
Price/Frequency: $1.95/Monthly



What You Need to Know: When their spaceship was bombarded with cosmic radiation, Reed Richards, Sue Storm, Johnny Storm and Ben Grimm crashed back to Earth with incredible powers. They joined forces to become the Fantastic Four as Mr. Fantastic, Invisible Woman, Human Torch and the Thing, respectively.

The Good: The art is phenomenal, solidifying Jim Lee's supremacy as THE superhero penciler. There is detail in this art that is rarely seen: leaves are individually drawn on a tree, each window is drawn on New York City buildings, and each rock on the Thing's body has all the individual nooks and crannies. The designs for spaceships, monsters and costumes show an imagination not seen too often in today's comics (and complements the "cosmic" feel of *FF* perfectly).



The characters in this book have been modernized for the '90s, but you don't lose the sense of wonder that the classic stories had. The tales have a good handle of the FF dynamic—the fact that the foursome are a family despite having superpowers; this dynamic, or the occasional example of humor, doesn't come across as forced.

The dialogue is well done, and fits each character—if you read the dialogue without any visuals, you'd know which character said what.

The Bad: There's too much story crammed into these books. It's like the highlights of the first 50 issues of the original *Fantastic Four* series have been summarized and interwoven into the first six issues of this new series. The reader is bombarded with so many new characters, situations and plot twists, that he never gets enough downtime to appreciate the four core FF characters. As soon as the FF is introduced, Mole Man, Namor and his Atlantean supporting cast is introduced. Then the Avengers enter the mix, followed by Black Panther, Dr. Doom, the Super Skrull, Silver Surfer and Galactus. It's as if *Fantastic Four* was being treated as a 12-issue mini-series with the creators crunching as much as they can in that space.

The brisk pacing results in fight scenes that are often too short (the Silver Surfer versus Super Skrull fight in issue #6 happens off-panel), and don't always deliver the anticipated impact. Also, there isn't enough background information given to new characters. We never learn enough about the Skrulls or Namor to truly care about their motivations. The book relies heavily on the fact that these are known characters and assumes a reintroduction is unnecessary.

The Buzz: Though Lee will step away from penciling *FF*, Brett Booth (*Backlash*) will take over. Judging by the backup story in *FF* #6, Booth can match Lee for detail, continuing the art style that has been established.

The Skinny: Incredible art compliments solid characters, but the rapid-fire pace in which the events unfold gives readers no time to see anything properly develop.

(Above) *The family dynamic is successful in FF*

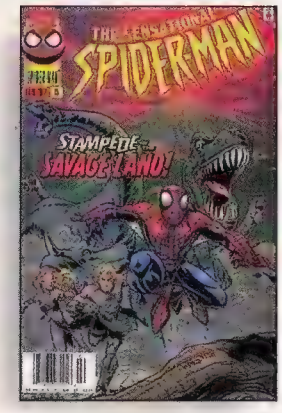
(At left) *The art shows Jim Lee at his best, proving classic heroes don't have to look "old"*

The Verdict: 4

THE SENSATIONAL SPIDER-MAN

Spidey's fun again, but is it too much?

Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Marvel Comics
Creative Team: Todd DeZago, Mike Wieringo & Richard Case
Price/Frequency: $1.99/Monthly



What You Need to Know: As a high-school student, Peter Parker was bitten by a radioactive spider, gained incredible spider-like powers and became the costumed crime-fighter Spider-Man. Now married to former model Mary Jane Watson, Peter continues fighting crime while also working as a freelance photographer for the *Daily Bugle*.

The Good: This book is fun, plain and simple. What makes Spidey great is his flippant and wise-crackin' attitude, and this series definitely delivers his lighter side. After spending a hard day fightin' the Looter in issue #12, Spidey can't get into his house because Mary Jane's Aunt Anna is visiting. (This is a perfect example of Spidey's "losing even when he wins" situations that have always made him such an enjoyable character.)

The art really adds to the enjoyment of the book too. Not only are the pages active, but they're full of visual humor. Spidey doesn't have to be saying or thinking anything, and his body language can be pretty funny.

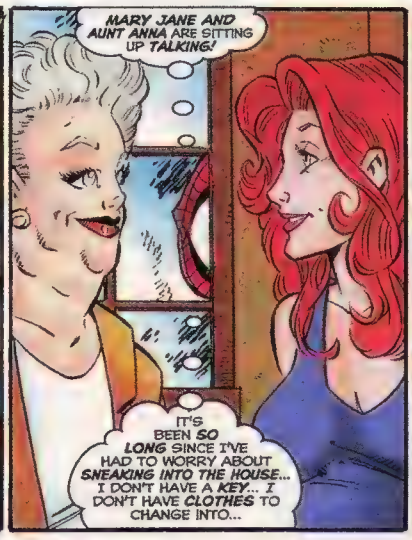
If you're a new reader, this book's real easy to jump into. The creators do a great job of recapping previous events and filling you in on who the heck all these characters are. And a little thing known as continuity (something sadly lacking in too many comics today) shows up when Stegron talks of being frozen in a glacier, and a notation tells the reader that incident happened back in *Thunderstrike* #20. Little details like that make readers feel like they're reading a piece of a vast comic book "universe."

The Bad: While *Sensational Spider-Man* is loads of fun, it's actually *too much* fun. It seems Marvel is overcompensating for the past two years' worth of grim-n-gritty Spidey by cramming fun and light-heartedness into this Spidey title. And *Sensational* goes overboard. There's hardly ever a real sense of urgency or drama, and the dangers faced aren't real or drastic enough. A better balance between drama and humor is needed.

What isn't needed is gratuitous unnecessary guest-appearances. Case in point: The Hulk's recent appearance (#13-#15) was completely unnecessary and actually distracted from the main story. (And, while the book's continuity references are good, Hulk's appearance makes absolutely no reference to the massive changes the Hulk's been undergoing lately in his own title!)

The Buzz: A lot of fans are taking to Mike Wieringo's rendition of Spider-Man, and the Spider-Man books are experiencing a revival since the conclusion of the "Spider-Clone" storyline.

The Skinny: Fans have complained for years, and Marvel has responded by going out of its way to make Spidey fun again. Unfortunately, the company's gone too far. It needs to tone down on the humor a bit and make Spidey more of a happy, but problematic, hero.



(Above) *Moments like these are fun, but sometimes the book goes overboard*

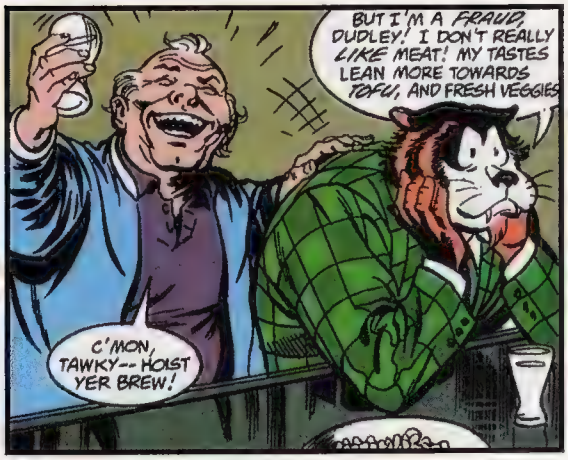
(At left) *A perfect example of how Spidey never truly wins (but the book should have more of this)*

The Verdict: 4

THE POWER OF SHAZAM!

The simplicity loses this series' magic

Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: DC Comics
Creative Team: Jerry Ordway, Peter Krause & Mike Manley
Price/Frequency: $1.75/Monthly



What You Need to Know: Given the power possessed by the wizard known as Shazam, teenager Billy Batson needs only speak the wizard's name, and he's transformed into Captain Marvel—the World's Mightiest Mortal.

The Good: You can sum up this series in one word: wholesome. This book's got a "feel-good," light atmosphere to it that gets to the real heart of what being a true hero is all about. And at the center of this title is its star, Captain Marvel, whose innocence and naïveté is an interesting backdrop for a supremely powerful hero. His wide-eyed exuberance for the world around him is a great draw for younger readers, as well as for folks who like a 1950s-type comic book style. This is the kind of book you'd feel comfortable giving to a younger brother or sister just starting to read comics.

With a majority of the issues being self-contained, an intro box explaining who the main characters are and a "Previously" box in the letters page filling you in on what's happened before, this series is super reader-friendly.

The Bad: Captain Marvel's youth and innocence may be a welcome change, but he's portrayed, as his former teammate Guy Gardner once put it, as Captain Whitebread. And unfortunately, his stories are *very* straight-forward with no big twists or surprises. It's somewhat disappointing to see someone who can go toe-to-toe with Superman fight lowly villains like a clunky old robot, an old woman and a bunch of gangsters. Plus, *Shazam!* has corny elements like a talking tiger named Tawky Tawny and a character named "Captain Marvel Jr.," which make the book a bit tougher to swallow.

It's also disappointing that the teen character of Billy Batson isn't fully explored. It seems Billy's school scenes are forced, almost to simply remind you that Billy is a teenage kid. The book should take a cue from a good handling of a teen's school life in DC's *Robin* or Marvel's *Untold Tales of Spider-Man*.

And while the art has good storytelling, it is not particularly flashy, further adding to the series' passive quality. For a book with a lot of bright cheery characters, there should be lots more splash and action.

The Buzz: This book should get a lot more attention when Captain Marvel joins the cast of *JLA* later this year.

The Skinny: The *Power of Shazam!*'s good-natured wholesomeness is a bit too much to swallow. It's unappealing to a mass audience, and seems much more targeted towards a younger crowd.

(Above and at right) Corny characters like Tawky Tawny and villains like gangsters make Shazam! a tough read, despite the wholesome feel

The Verdict: 3

X-O MANOWAR

Clichéd components blast X-cellent twists

Genre: Superhero action/adventure
Publisher: Acclaim Comics
Creative Team: Mark Waid & Brian Augustyn and Sean Chen & Tom Ryder
Price/Frequency: $2.50/Monthly

What You Need to Know: Scientist Donovan Wylie permanently bonded with the mysterious X-O Manowar armor in order to save his life. Since the armor is property of the U.S. Army, he now reluctantly works with the military.

The Good: The series begins very routinely, with a fearless hero in the X-O armor stopping terrorists, being heroic, blah blah blah. But for many of the clichés, you're given an unconventional twist. For example, at the end of the first issue the terrorists *kill the hero*, forcing the armor's technical analyst (Wylie) to reluctantly don the armor in order to save his own life (he would've been killed by a mile-high drop). Then the terrorists' ship crashes into the Washington Monument…*destroying it.* This system of taking predictable plot-lines and twisting them a little bit keeps your interest.

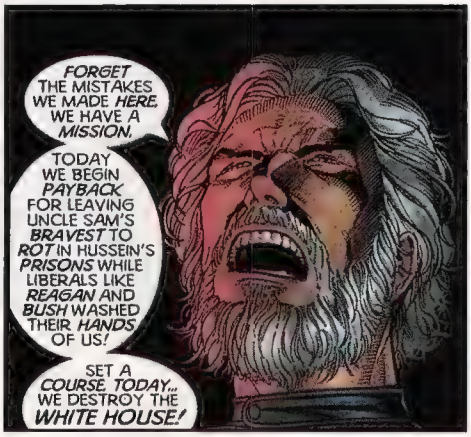
The concept behind the armor itself is interesting too. The fact that it's been handed down through history—origin unknown, until the U.S. military seized it from the Nazis—leaves a lot of potential for interesting stories. The fact that the armor works off of the wearer's fears, and doesn't just protect him from everything is an interesting twist (which explains why the fearless X-O wearer in issue #1 died).

Also, the artwork complements this book well. The armor comes across actually looking metallic, and the use of computer coloring effects is put to great use in this title.

The Bad: Twists aside, there are other clichéd elements to this book that *aren't* fleshed out: Where did the ultra-high-tech terrorist group R.A.G.E. come from? Why are they raiding U.S. bases? They should be more than just the routine high-tech enemy organization, but they aren't.

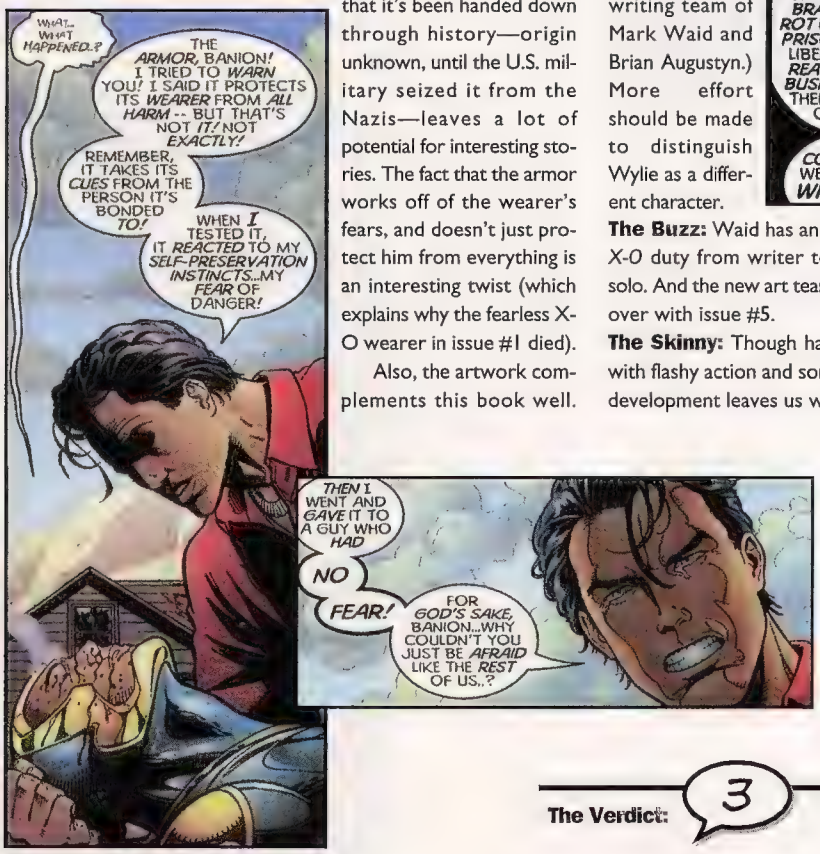
There isn't much depth given to the supporting characters. Just who is Wylie's assistant Renata, who is thrown haphazardly into stories? Having Donovan merely say that she's his best friend isn't enough for readers.

And if you took Wylie's dialogue out of the book, you'd swear that *The Flash*'s Wally West was saying it. And, like Wylie, West is a smart-aleck young hero, unsure of himself and fearful of a big commitment to his girlfriend. (And, hey, the two titles share the same writing team of Mark Waid and Brian Augustyn.) More effort should be made to distinguish Wylie as a different character.



The Buzz: Waid has announced that he plans on cutting back his *X-O* duty from writer to story consultant, with Augustyn flying solo. And the new art team of Scot Eaton and Pam Eklund have taken over with issue #5.

The Skinny: Though having a good handling of armored heroes with flashy action and some twists, the lack of character depth and development leaves us wanting more.



(Above) *The terrorist group R.A.G.E. is never fleshed out to our satisfaction*

(At left) *The concept of fear driving the X-O armor is a great twist*

The Verdict: 3

WildC.A.T.S

COVERT-ACTION-TEAMS

#37

Brandon's Back!

WildC.A.T.S co-creator and original writer Brandon Choi returns to the team he helped make famous. It's a new era for the WildC.A.T.S. with the addition of Jonathan Peterson and new regular penciler Mat (DefCon 4) Broome and the returning Troy Hubbs! Don't miss an issue!

Visit WildStorm on the Web at http://www.wildstorm.com!

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Brandon Choi & Jonathan Peterson
Mat Broome • Troy Hubbs

Coming in

APRIL

from WildStorm Productions and Image Comics

PICKS

BEHOLD!

THEY'RE MAD, I TELL YOU!

THE MUST-READ COMICS SHIPPING IN APRIL

ADVENTURES IN THE DC UNIVERSE #3

AQUAMAN #33

TITLES DENOTED WITH A **MR** CONTAIN MATERIAL THAT'S SUGGESTED FOR MATURE READERS.

ADVENTURES IN THE DC UNIVERSE #3

DC COMICS We're at an all-time low. Normally, when we start drooling over the prospect of two comic book babes battlin' it out, we're just pathetic. But when those comic book characters are drawn in the "Batman: The Animated Series" style and we still get all clammy and start humming "Mmmmmm," we're a lost cause. So come, join us as this ish sees Wonder Woman wrestle the Cheetah. There'll be plenty o' hair pullin'. Mmmmm…. By Steve Vance, Paul Dini, John Delaney, Ron Boyd and Bruce Timm. **$1.75**

AMALGAM COMICS

DC COMICS "Lobo the Duck"? What, is *Wizard* in charge of this Amalgam thing all of a sudden? Geez, maybe this here well be dry. But just in case, go check out our spiffy Amalgam feature in this issue for the full low-down on the 12 new DC/Marvel crossover combos. Brought to you by a bunch of creators including Mark Waid, Alan Grant, Christopher Priest and Peter Milligan. **$1.95 EACH**

AQUAMAN #33

DC COMICS Got an itchy red rash? Skin starting to scale up? Or are weird things growing all over your body? Well, either take your Pa's advice and leave the cattle alone or, if you're Aquaman, stop using them funky new powers you picked up a couple of months ago. See, the more you use them, the more you…change. By Peter David, Jim Calafiore and P.L. Palmiotti. David says, "It's about Aquaman coming to terms with powers and abilities that he's always possessed, but which he feels will lead him down a direction he doesn't want to go. Aquaman finds himself possessed of absolute power in terms of control over other living beings. He is terribly afraid of being corrupted by it. It's also an exploration of what it is to be a king and the separate moral code under which kings live. It's a rather unique story in that Aquaman time travels back to the days of ancient Atlantis and gets to interact with some of the characters from *The Atlantis Chronicles*." **$1.75**

ASTRO CITY #9

IMAGE Pro: you've finally made it as a sidekick to an honest-to-goodness superhero. Con: You're now caught in the middle of an alien invasion. Pro: Only you know the dark secret of the Confessor. Con: That Confessor guy? He's the "hero" you're the sidekick to. What to do? Heck, if it were us, we'd rat out the good guys, throw in with the aliens and enslave humanity. But that's just us. By Kurt Busiek, Brent Anderson and Will Blyberg. **$2.50**

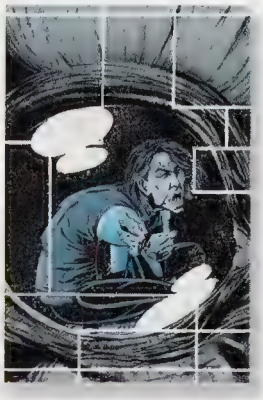
BATMAN/ALIENS #2 (OF 2)

DARK HORSE Wow…just think of how many more Batman action figures this crossover could spawn. Let's see…you could have "Holy Bat-&%$@, my chest just exploded!"-Batman, "Hey…that thing's blood went right through Alfred"-Batman and "Ugh…Sigourney Weaver looks even more like a guy with that shaved melon"-Batman. They'd make a mint! Anyhoo, Batman beats the aliens this ish. Go buy it. By Ron Marz and Bernie Wrightson **$4.95**

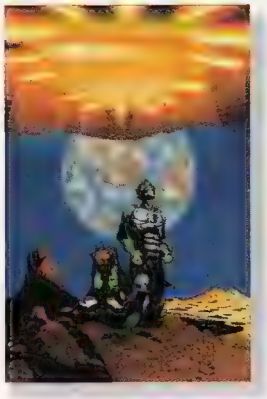
BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN #7 (OF 13)

DC COMICS "World's Greatest Detective," our ass! Bats has

BATMAN: THE LONG HALLOWEEN #7



BRAINBANX #4



GREEN LANTERN #87

IMPULSE #26

had seven freakin' issues to try and figure out who the serial killer Holiday is, and so far he's got squat! The plus-side: this 13-part miniseries is the BEST Batman book on the market today, with a rich, enthralling supporting cast of suspects, way-cool Bat-villains and the "Year One" Batman! This ish sees the Riddler begin his own hunt for Holiday. By Jeph Loeb and Tim Sale. **$2.95**

BRAINBANX #4

HELIX/DC Anna's in some deep doo-doo. She's stuck in Sheol, that alien world where every vile, disgusting creature is after her. And to top it all off, she's met up with Logan, the crazy son of the guy behind the ORC experiments that put her there in the first place. Next stop: inside Logan's head. That could be real...squishy. By Elaine Lee and Temujin. **$2.50**

DAREDEVIL #365

MARVEL Ready? Follow along now: 1) Mr. Fear wants Osborn Chemicals; 2) Daredevil doesn't want him to have it; 3) Uh-oh, Molten Man just showed up (D'oh!); 4) Everybody fights, probably resulting in Osborn Chemicals going PIFF in a big cloud of smoke. Hey, DD should probably just blow up Osborn Chemicals in the first place and avoid all that fightin'. By Joe Kelly, Cary Nord and Matt Ryan. **$1.95**

THE FLASH #126

DC COMICS Ooops, looks like Major Disaster is going to destroy Santa Marta, Calif., new home of the Flash. (And Wally couldn't figure out why Keystone City, his ex-hometown, wanted to get rid of him....) Well, hopefully Wally can avoid Disaster and save Santa Marta so the next wave of villains can bring it near destruction again. By Mark Waid, Brian Augustyn, Paul Ryan and John Nyberg. **$1.75**

GEN[13] #18

IMAGE The Keepers, a not terribly friendly bunch from Lynch's past, come looking for Lynch's head, and they're not above levelin' the town to get it. Wonder what the odds are of having all the super-types move to Santa Marta, so when a bad guy eventually blows it up, it'll put an end to all this silliness? By Brandon Choi, J. Scott Campbell and Alex Garner. **$2.50**

GENERATION X #28

MARVEL Bastion, the no-good rat-bastard with a "kill all mutants" agenda, has captured Jubilee and is lookin' to get all sorts of secret info out of her to use against alla them Marvel X-types. We've never been fans of Jubilation "I'm a pale copy of Kitty Pryde" Lee, so if he does off her...that's okay by us. By Scott Lobdell and Chris Bachalo. **$1.95**

GREEN LANTERN #87

DC COMICS An alien invasion? Again? Geez, the only race left that hasn't invaded Earth are those weird asparagus creatures from the planet Phoenix ate waaaay back in *Uncanny X-Men* #135. We need some new stories, stuff with clones, costume redesigns, long-time superheroes going nuts and being killed...y'know, meaty stuff. *Sigh.* By Ron Marz, Tom Grindberg and Romeo Tanghal. That funky guy Marz says, "There's a vast alien invasion coming into our solar system attempting to terraform Earth into a more alien environment, so it's mostly a Green Lantern/Martian Manhunter adventure. The Manhunter kind of freaks Kyle out. I drew a lot of parallels between them because they're both the last of their kind. Kyle's the last Lantern, J'onn's the last green Martian. There's a bit of uniqueness to both of them." **$1.75**

HEPCATS #5

ANTARCTIC PRESS What's the deal with Erica? And why is there some strange guy following her? What's he got to do with her past and what is it about her past that she's trying to keep hidden? And what's with Greedo shooting first in "Star Wars: The Special Edition"? Grrr. That makes us soooo mad. By Martin Wagner. **MR $2.95**

IMPULSE #26

DC COMICS "I ran all the way home from the 30th century...and boy are my legs tired!".....*ahem.* Anyway, Impulse returns to the 20th century not to a hero's welcome, but to no welcome.

READ THIS BOOK!

HITMAN #15

DC COMICS "Ace of Killers," Part 1 (of 6). There's this group called the Arkannone, who are these really cool killers, but they failed to kill Hitman last time they tried. So they're really, really pissed. But now they've decided to get revenge. So they send in the Mawzir (whatever the hell that is) and Hitman's gonna rue the day he messed with them (or so they hope). By Garth Ennis and John McCrea. Ennis says on the issue, "It's about the Mawzir, the demon from the first few issues of *Hitman*, coming back to get Tommy. But there's also this gun that was created in the last century with the power to kill demons called the Ace of Winchesters. Tommy wants to use the gun to kill the Mawzir, and the Mawzir wants to make sure Tommy doesn't get his hands on it. There's the usual round of mayhem and bad humor. There'll also be a special appearance by Catwoman, Etrigan the Demon and a couple of others. It should be just about the biggest, wildest Hitman story ever. It'll certainly be the final showdown between Tommy and the Mawzir." **$2.25**

See, his guardian, Max, and everything else in the house is just...gone. By Mark Waid, Craig Rousseau and Wayne Faucher. **$1.75**

JLA #6

DC COMICS Well, this sounds neat. First, a guardian angel goes to the JLA 'cause Armageddon (the end of all that is or some something) is right around the corner and he wants to stop it. Then more angels show up to shut the first angel up, and then Neron, that Mr. Cranky-Pants from *Underworld Unleashed* and his demons show up and...oh, there's a big fight and stuff blows up. Should be neat though. By Grant Morrison, Howard Porter and John Dell. **$1.95**

KA-ZAR #2

MARVEL Oh boy, it's Ka-Zar vs. Gregor, the guy who trained the late Kraven the Hunter (no, he's not "late"...he's dead, silly). Two trained hunters stalking each other in the Savage Land. Which one of these bad boys will come out the victor? All that and Shanna discovers the secret Ka-Zar's been keeping from her all these years. One that could shatter their marriage! (Our guess: He's really a girl!) By Mark Waid, Andy Kubert and Jesse Delperdan. **$1.95**

LEAVE IT TO CHANCE #6

IMAGE Chance gets sent off to private school and comes face to face with the dreaded Captain Hitch, a pirate ghost. Of course, Chance gets mixed up in a big mess when she and a bunch of friends try to get to the bottom of the mystery and discover just what's buried under the school. By "Captain" James Robinson, Paul "First Mate" Smith and George "I like boats" Freeman. Robinson says, "After the mischief she's gotten into, Chance is sent away to school, where she promptly becomes involved with smuggling and a pirate ghost. This issue is filled with spooky, dark haunted mansion kind of things. Lots of things that go bump in the night, lots of chains rattling, lots of creaking doors. And Chance and a small group of other students try to solve this mystery. Ultimately, it ends with a really cool cliffhanger." **$2.50**

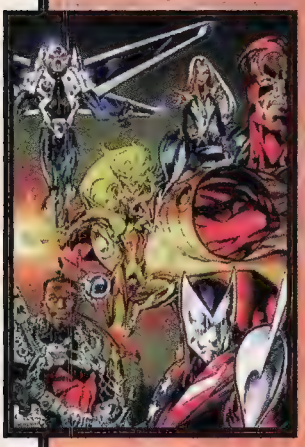
JLA #6

LEGIONNAIRES #49

READ THIS BOOK!

THUNDERBOLTS #3

MARVEL Since the Fantastic Four's gone and their place is free, the Thunderbolts don't waste any time moving into Four Freedoms Plaza. (They knew Reed was a genius and figured he'd have one of those cable descramblers.) The T-Bolts know that being the only superhero team in town has perks like having a cool place to hang (with no rent!), and they wanna stay the only superhero team in town...even if they have to kill for it! And make sure you check out this month's *Spider-Man Team-Up #7*, which also stars those wacky Thunderbolts kids. By Kurt Busiek, Mark Bagley and Vince Russell. Busiek says, "Baron Strucker and Hydra have been infiltrating New York's organized crime scene, and the [new] Masters of Evil are working with them. Now, since the Thunderbolts are actually the Masters of Evil, they're not happy about anyone taking over their name. So in one sense, the Thunderbolts are taking on the Masters of Evil in their role as replacements for the Avengers, but in another sense it's a grudge match over who gets to use the name. The Black Widow also makes a brief guest appearance. But will she work with the Thunderbolts or is she going to find something out about them?" **$1.95**



LEGION OF SUPER-HEROES #93

DC COMICS The Legion's had a rough time lately...and now it gets even rougher. One of the team, Cosmic Boy, has to go through an operation that will either save his life...or kill him (not good). Then Ferro, that iron mask-wearing guy, fights his brother Douglas, that other iron mask-wearing guy. By Tom Peyer, Tom McCraw, Mike Collins and Drew Geraci. **$2.25**

LEGIONNAIRES #49

DC COMICS Mordru is back and the Legionnaires put out the call for every super-being in the galaxy to come and help. Who answers the call? Andromeda? Not interested. Element Lad? Sorry, he can't even stand. So it's up to the Legion and...the Heroes of Lallor and the Uncanny Amazers! And you know what that means...we're all dead. Yay. By Roger Stern, Tom McCraw, Jeffrey Moy and W.C. Carani. **$2.25**

LORDS OF MISRULE #4

DARK HORSE Jack's still trying to figure out what the hell is happenin' in the town o' Callow. Some things that've been seen are: dead fighter pilots, crop circles, lots and lots of rats and a weird demon dog-thing. And Jack seems to be at the center of it all. Hey, with it being all the rage these days, maybe it's an alien invasion. By Dan Abnett, John Timlinson, Steve White and Peter Snejbjerg. **MR $2.95**

OPERATION: STORMBREAKER

ACCLAIM It's WWII and those damn Nazi guys have released The Teutonic Knight, their way of kickin' ass and takin' names—and he's pretty much unstoppable. Our last hope: the Golden Age Valiant heroes who think that by breaking into the Nazis' stronghold, they can find a way to shut down the Knight. By Brian Augustyn, Mark Waid, Doug Braithwaite and Robin Riggs. "Mark Waid and I created three characters for this. There's a nearly seven-foot-tall warrior woman, inhabited by the spirit of Spartan gods, whose name is Nemesis. A fellow, who is Superman and

Captain America rolled into one, named Bravado. And the resident super-speedster of the 1940s Acclaim universe—Jack Rapid. I think we may have found the last super-speedster name available. It's not a good one, but it's memorable." **$3.95**

POISON ELVES #23

SIRIUS Only a select few know about Sanctuary (a sort of other-dimensional hideout for a guild of elfin assassins) and the Blood Guard (a secret police group hunting the aforementioned assassins). But, after this ish, everyone's gonna know. Find out how they were formed, why they were formed and who formed them. Plus, our boy Lusiphur's been gettin' a bit uppity lately, which makes Morachi and Talon seriously consider givin' him the boot from the assassin's guild. But as everyone knows, it's not nice to piss off Lusiphur. By Drew Hayes. **$2.50**

THE POWER OF SHAZAM! #27

DC COMICS After Dr. Sivana screwed with time, C.C. Batson, the new Captain Marvel, figures out that history's been really mucked with, and things certainly ain't the way they should be. Unfortunately, the only way to correct the problem is for Captain Marvel to sacrifice himself. Hey...maybe if he sacrifices Uncle Dudley, Tawky Tawny or Hoppy the Marvel Bunny, he can get by. By Jerry Ordway, Peter Krause and Mike Manley. Ordway says, "It's really a bit of a soul search for Billy Batson's father, who–in this reality–has the powers of Captain Marvel. It's on him to put time back the way it's supposed to be, at the risk of losing his life again. The neat thing in here is we show a few alternate reality Captain Marvels that could be, or maybe *were*. I think fans will get a kick out of it." **$1.75**

PREACHER #26

VERTIGO/DC "To the Streets of Manhattan I Wandered Away," Part 2 (of 2). Here it is, the conclusion of that whole Cassidy story. Well, now that he's a vampire, what's he gonna do? Heck, the only thing he can do: go to America and get drunk with hippies! (That's what *we* did when we became soulless servants of darkness.) By Garth Ennis and Steve Dillon. **MR $2.50**

QUANTUM & WOODY #3

ACCLAIM Those crazy superhero guys who really *shouldn't* be superhero guys have their first real case. They're on the trail of an international conspiracy, hoping to find some real clues. But, of course, things tend to go a little wrong. But the good news is, there's an addition to their team: a goat. Yep, a goat. By Christopher Priest, Mark Bright and Greg Adams. Priest says, "*Quantum & Woody* is based on the friendship of Doc [M.D Bright] and myself. We don't look like these guys, but for all practical intents and purposes, Doc is Woody and I'm Quantum. He's very funny and mocks everything I do, while I take everything more seriously. I'm glad we're able to lean heavily on it being silly and having comedic aspects, but if you take all the jokes out of it, it's pretty much just a superhero book." **$2.50**

ROBIN #42

DC COMICS Turn on the Bat-signal! Trigger Superman's signal watch! Activate the Red Bee's danger-stick! Crocky the Crocodile, beloved Gotham City mascot, has gone on a crime spree! Have no fear, though, Robin the Boy Wonder will beat and perhaps cripple the rebellious reptile. By Chuck Dixon, Jason Armstrong and Robert Campanella. **$1.95**

THE POWER OF SHAZAM! #27

PREACHER #26

PAPERBACK PICKS

Trade Paperbacks You Won't Wanna Miss

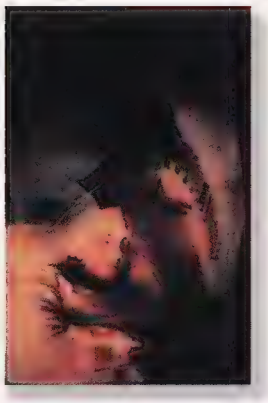
Leave It to Chance (Image)
The first few issues of *Leave It to Chance* literally flew off the shelves. But don't worry if you missed 'em, cause with this nifty trade paperback, you can get the first four issues combined into one. Chance Falconer is an adventurous 14-year-old girl who wants to prove to her father that she can take over his job as a mystical protector of their home city, Devil's Echo. She's real good at finding action and getting into trouble. Great stuff by James Robinson and Paul Smith. **$9.95**

Impulse: Reckless Youth (DC)
Collected in this trade paperback are Impulse's first appearances in *Flash* #92-#94 as well as *Impulse* #1-#6. You'll get to see how Bart Allen was raised in a 30th century virtual reality environment where whatever he did was totally safe, and how he's tried adjusting to reality in the 20th century... where things can hurt him. (Uh-oh.) By Mark Waid, Mike Wieringo, Carlos Pacheco and Humberto Ramos. **$14.95**

Gen^{13}: Backlist (Image)
This trade paperback collects all those impossible to find issues of *Gen^{13}*. There's the rescripted *Gen^{13}* 1/2, *Gen^{13}* #0, *Gen^{13}* (Vol. 2) #1, *Gen^{13}: Unreal World* and the "Gen^{13}: Now Departing from Gate 37" story from *WildStorm!* #1. Catch the Gen^{13} kids at their bestest and worstest. By various writers and artists including Brandon Choi, Ryan Benjamin, Mike Heisler, Humberto Ramos and Walt Simonson. **$16.95**

PICKS

QUANTUM & WOODY #3



SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #51

SANDMAN MYSTERY THEATRE #51

VERTIGO/DC "The Scarlet Ghost," Part 3 (of 4). Well, Dian Belmont, Sandman's girlfriend, finally made it into the pulp publishing business! But uh-oh, a bomb just went off and knocked her into a coma. Hmmm…we're thinkin' the Sandman is gonna go lookin' for whoever's responsible and cave their teeth in with a bat. By Matt Wagner, Steven T. Seagle and Guy Davis. **MR $2.50**

THE SAVAGE DRAGON #38

IMAGE It's gonna be the most-bestest, knock-down, drag-out, face-squeezing, paper-cut with the lemon juice in it, battle to end all battles as the Savage Dragon finally squares off against Cyberface, with the winner deciding the fate of Chicago's Vicious Circle. By Erik Larsen. **$2.50**

UNKNOWN SOLDIER #3

DC COMICS After nearly being killed by the black-ops assassin Screwball, Agent Clyde ends up working with her to avoid another team of assassins. All this, just 'cause he wants to find the Unknown Soldier. It's now become a race to see if Clyde can find out the truth before he becomes a smear on the pavement. By Garth Ennis and Kilian Plunkett. **MR $2.50**

UNTOLD TALES OF SPIDER-MAN #22

MARVEL Everyone gets a taste of fear when the Scarecrow comes to town. It's up to Spider-Man to get this weirdo out of New York before things really get…well…worse than they normally are in New York. By Kurt Busiek, Pat Olliffe and Al Williamson. **99 CENTS**

YOUNG HEROES IN LOVE #1

DC COMICS "Young Heroes in Love." Wow…just makes you want to avoid it at all costs on the comic racks, don't it? But hey, once you get past that…*special* title, it's actually pretty darn groovy. There's a new group of super teens who, besides saving the world now and then, just can't seem to stay in their suits. Oh, there's intrigue and manipulation and action, but more importantly there's lust and touching and all that good stuff. By Dan Raspler, Dev Madan and Keith Champagne. Raspler says, "It's a romantic comedy/soap opera with giant, undead killer mummies. That's the best way to describe it. The team is sort of like a garage band compared to the JLA. The characters want to do good. They want to serve, but there's a lot more going on with them than just being superheroes." **$1.75** W

AT A GLANCE

A LISTING OF THE HIGH-PROFILE BOOKS SHIPPING IN APRIL

Avengers #8 (Marvel)
Wonder Man's back and he's helping the Avengers take down Ultron and the Lethal Legion. **$1.95**

Batman #543 (DC)
Batman's still on the trail of the killer called Faceless. He better work fast before Faceless kills again. **$1.95**

Captain America #8 (Marvel)
See Cap as he was in the early days of the war with Nick Fury and his Howling Commandos. **$1.95**

Curse of the Spawn #8 (Image)
Sam and Twitch must find the killer named Suture and stop the killing before more blood flows. **$1.95**

The Darkness #5 (Image)
Jackie's getting the handle of his Darkness power, while the underworld mobs come to the brink of war. **$2.50**

Detective Comics #710 (DC)
Batman must break his own code and use a gun to stop Gunhawk from killing. **$1.95**

DV8 #7 (Image)
Sideways Bob tells the kids a tale of how he first met team leader Ivana Baiul…and what came of that meeting. **$2.50**

Fantastic Four #8 (Marvel)
The Inhumans make a guest appearance when the FF travels to the Himalayas to stop a worldwide threat. **$1.95**

Gen^{13} Bootleg #6 (Image)
Fairchild hitches a ride through time with a whacko who steals technology. Can she stop him and get back to her own time? **$2.50**

Iron Man #8 (Marvel)
Tony's friend Rebel died testing the Iron Man armor. Find out who Rebel was and what he meant to Tony. **$1.95**

Lady Death: The Crucible #4 (Chaos!)
Lady Death and her Viking band clash with Scorpia and the Necro Guard in a rip-roaring battle in Asgard. **$2.95**

Spawn #61 (Image)
Spawn and the Clown come down to their final battle. But who will survive? **$1.95**

Spider-Man Books (Marvel)
Amazing Spider-Man #424 brings the Hand, Dragonfly, Delilah, the Rose and Elektra into Spidey's life. *Sensational Spider-Man #17* has the Black Cat battling it out with the Prowler. In Peter Parker, *Spider-Man #81*, Shang-Chi makes an appearance to stop the Cat. *Spectacular Spider-Man #247* sheds some light on the connection between J. Jonah and the Jack O'Lantern. **$1.95 each**

Star Wars: X-Wing Rogue Squadron—Requiem for a Rogue #1 (Dark Horse)
Wedge and his crew try to save a downed cruise-liner from a bunch of savages on a pre-evolutionary planet. **$2.95**

Superman Books (DC)
Superman: The Man of Steel #68 pits Supes against Metallo, who has a nuclear sub at his disposal. *Superman #124* shows Kandor in chaos as Scorn takes over. *Adventures of Superman #547* has the Atom helping Superman figure out a way into Kandor. In *Action Comics #734*, Supes and the Atom try to help Kandor, but end up getting attacked. **$1.95 each**

Uncanny X-Men #345 (Marvel)
The X-Men are on their way home when they discover a huge, strange object heading toward Earth. **$1.95**

Witchblade #14 (Image)
Sara learns the identity of the Microwave Murderer, but is it too late to save her friend Lisa? **$2.50**

Wolverine #114 (Marvel)
Wolverine finds himself going up against an old enemy of his, Donald Pierce. **$1.95**

X-Man #28 (Marvel)
Nate can either let his powers kill him or accept help from the Dark Beast. **$1.95**

X-Men #65 (Marvel)
Can Robert Kelly stop Henry Gyrich's plans to kill all mutants before it's too late? **$1.95** ●

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TRAILER PARK

Wizard's column about Hollywood and TV and stuff like that

SURFER, TURTLES LEAD FOX'S FALL LINEUP

By Rob Allstetter

"X-Men" will be gone and **"Spider-Man"** is moving to weekday mornings, but Marvel will still have a strong presence on the Fox network next television season.

The **"Silver Surfer"** animated series will be the first result of a seven-year contract between Marvel, Fox and Saban Entertainment to develop at least four animated series based on Marvel characters. "Silver Surfer" will premiere as a special in November and then will begin as a regular series in January, replacing "X-Men" in Fox's lineup on Saturdays at 11 a.m. (ET). ("X-Men" will be packaged in an hour-long weekday syndicated block by Saban.)

"Silver Surfer" will be executive-produced by Marvel's **Stan Lee**, who created the character with **Jack Kirby**, and Avi Arad. Larry Brody, a television veteran, is producer/story editor, and Tom McLaughlin is producer.

"For three decades, the Silver Surfer has been a hero and role model to young people as he seeks justice in a complex universe," said Arad. "As his realm now expands to include television, the Silver Surfer will continue his struggle against evil with exciting new stories and advanced animation for the '90s audience."

The series will include the Silver Surfer's origin, as Norrin Radd sacrifices himself to save his planet, Zenn-La. The series will include many of Marvel's cosmic characters, including **Galactus**, **Thanos**, **Warlock**, Pip the Troll, Nebula and the Skrulls.

"The 'Silver Surfer' television series is being developed in the finest tradition of Marvel characters—with high-power action and entertainment, as well as a positive message," said Margaret Loesch, chairman and CEO of Fox's children's division. "It will be an important addition to the Fox Kids Network as we continue our successful relationship with Marvel and build upon the highly rated 'X-Men' and 'Spider-Man' series."

"Silver Surfer" soars onto TV screens in November

Look for a major marketing blitz with "Silver Surfer," starting with a line of action figures from Toy Biz.

"Silver Surfer" is one of seven new shows Fox announced for the new season, including a live-action **Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles** series featuring a new *female* turtle, Venus de Milo. According to Mark Freedman, president of the Turtles licensor, Surge Licensing, Inc., it will also have an edgy style and a focus on the evolution and continued mutation of the heroes. Also look for revamped versions of "BeetleBorgs" and "Power Rangers."

Fox's weekday lineup will include "Bobby's World" at 8 a.m., "Spider-Man" at 8:30, "Casper" at 3 p.m., "BeetleBorgs Met-

allix" at 3:30, "Goosebumps" at 4 and "Power Rangers Turbo" at 4:30.

The Saturday lineup will include "Home to Rent" at 8 a.m.; "Mowgli: The New Adventures of the Jungle Book" at 8:30; "Igor" at 9; "Life with Louie" at 9:30; "Goosebumps" at 10; "The Adventures of Sam & Max: Freelance Police" at 10:30; "Silver Surfer" at 11; and "Ninja Turtles: The Next Mutation" at 11:30.

GAIMAN MAY DIRECT 'DEATH'

Warner Bros. has optioned **"Death: The High Cost of Living"** for a live-action film and has tabbed the DC comic book's creator, **Neil Gaiman**, to write the screenplay. Gaiman, in the middle of a three-book deal with Avon Books, might also direct the movie.

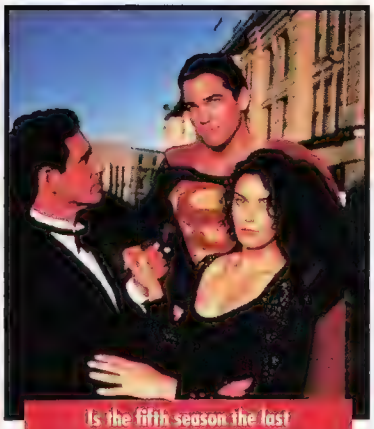
A movie based on Gaiman's ***Sandman*** comic book series is also in development at Warner Bros.

Neil Gaiman (at right) is set to write "Death" flick

CAIN ON WANE AS SUPES?

It seems increasingly likely that next season will be the last for ABC's **"Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Superman."** Ratings are down considerably for the fourth season; the series, which ranked 44th last season, ranks 82nd this season.

"Lois & Clark," which has already been renewed for next season, was moved from 8 p.m. to 7 p.m. (ET) on Sundays in January and was conspicuously absent during the February sweeps. Rumors persist that the show will be moved to another night.



Is the fifth season the last for "Lois & Clark"?

Plus, feature films beckon "Lois & Clark" stars Dean Cain and Teri Hatcher.

"I was offered a couple of films that made it real interesting and made it seem like I was going to go someplace," Cain told "Access Hollywood." "But you can't do it. You're tied down [contractually]. You can't go to another team. You're stuck on this one. And that's OK.

"I imagine we'll do a fifth season, and that will probably be it."

MIGHTY MARVEL UPDATE

There appears to be movement on two long-discussed Marvel projects: the live-action **"Spider-Man"** theatrical film and the **"Generation X"** live-action television series.

The film rights for "Spider-Man" have been tangled in litigation, but *Daily Variety* reported that MGM was closing on a settlement for the rights with Carolco Pictures, Canal Plus and Marvel Entertainment. Still in the mix: Viacom, which is claiming worldwide TV and theatrical rights, and Columbia TriStar, which is claiming video rights.

Writer/director/producer James Cameron has long been attached to the project. It is unknown if he will be involved if "Spider-Man" is developed at MGM. Cameron has a first-look deal with Fox and reportedly is interested in producing a "Planet of the Apes" film that would star **Arnold Schwarzenegger**.

On the television front, plans for a syndicated series based on last year's "Generation X" telefilm on Fox have been put on hold. New World Entertainment, which produced the movie and was to produce the series, was recently purchased by Rupert Murdoch, owner of Fox.

However, there are now plans for a second "Generation X" telefilm to air on Fox. The second film will be produced by Fox's television unit. Eric Blakeney, who wrote and executive-produced the first movie, will not be involved in the second.

In other Marvel news, at press time it remained unclear if the second season of **"The Incredible Hulk"** animated series would be produced through New World Animation, which produced the first season, or Saban Entertainment.

THE FORCE LIVES ON

"Star Wars" soars—again. Buoyed by an enormous opening for its re-release in January ($36.2 million in its first weekend), George Lucas' space film has overtaken "E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial" as, domestically, the top-grossing movie of all time.

"Star Wars" figures to make more than $100 million in its second release and has blasted past the $400-million mark overall. The re-release's opening-weekend take set a January weekend record, shattering the $13.3 million record set by "Higher Learning" in 1995. The film also had the ninth-largest three-day opening in history.

"Star Wars" forces "E.T." out as top-grosser

BATMAN LIGHT?

The animated **"Batman"** is apparently following the attitude of the live-action movie franchise. In an announcement about the cartoon series' move from Fox to Kids' WB next fall, Warner Bros. Animation said the show will be "lighter in tone and look."

"Batman" will air Saturdays at 10 a.m. (ET), followed by "Superman." Reruns of "Batman" will alternate with "Superman" episodes on **"The New Adventures of Batman/Superman,"** weekdays at 4:30 p.m.

Kids' WB is adding 10 hours of weekly programming for the fall, for a total of 19

"Lois & Clark" photo courtesy of Everett Collection

The animated "Batman" will take on a lighter "Superman"-like tone

over six days. The network is taking advantage of the recent merger of Time-Warner and Turner Broadcasting for more than 1,000 Looney Tunes cartoons and the Turner-produced "Captain Planet."

The Kids' WB Saturday morning lineup will include "Umptee-3 TV," a new educational animated show from Norman Lear, at 8; "Animaniacs" at 8:30; "Pinky & The Brain" at 9; "Calamity Jane," a new animated series, at 9:30; "Batman" at 10; "Superman" at 10:30; "The Daffy Duck Show" at 11; and "The Tweety & Sylvester Mysteries" at 11:30.

The weekday lineup will include "Tiny Toon Adventures" at 7 a.m.; "The Adventures of Captain Planet" at 7:30 a.m.; "The Bugs 'n' Daffy Show" at 3 p.m.; "Pinky & The Brain" at 4 p.m.; and "The New Adventures of Batman/Superman" at 4:30.

All photos on this page are courtesy of Everett Collection

STAR TREK MEETS SPIDER-MAN

Tim Russ, who plays the Vulcan Tuvok on "Star Trek: Voyager," is joining the list of "Trek" performers who have done voices on the "Spider-Man" animated series. He will be the voice of The Prowler on an upcoming episode.

"Tim Russ was excellent, even without the ears," said "Spider-Man" story editor and producer John Semper. "I was at a party at Majel Barrett-Roddenberry's and I ran into Tim. I said, 'Have you ever thought of doing animated voices? I'm producing 'Spider-Man;' give me a call.'

"Well, I'm sure he thought he'd never hear from me again in his life, but he was working with me the next week. And he was just great."

Tim Russ (left, as Tuvok) voices The Prowler on "Spider-Man"

"Star Trek" alumni who have done Spidey voices include Majel Barrett-Roddenberry (Nurse Chapel) as Anna Watson, George Takei (Sulu) as Wong and Nichelle Nichols (Uhura) as a vampire queen.

"I had the most fun with guest voices on this show," Semper said.

Production of "Spider-Man" has stopped after 65 episodes.

BLADE UNDER WAY

Production began in early February on **"Blade,"** the live-action film from New Line Cinema based on the Marvel Comics vampire hunter. As previously reported in "Trailer Park," **Wesley Snipes** is playing the title role, and Stephen Dorff is playing the villain, Deacon Frost.

THE BAT-BOX

Joel Schumacher isn't finished directing **George Clooney** just yet.

Don't worry, everything went fine between Schumacher and Clooney on the set of **"Batman & Robin"**—so well that Schumacher will be directing an episode of Clooney's television gig, "ER," that will air in May on NBC.

Schumacher's directing "ER" is a thank you to John Wells, the drama series' executive producer, for his cooperation in juggling Clooney's simultaneous television and film duties during the past few months. "Batman & Robin" was filmed in the Los Angeles area and on the Warner Bros. lot in Burbank, Calif., just a few stages away from where "ER" is shot.

Schumacher (above, top) and Clooney will re-team on "ER"

Schumacher said he was "honored" to work on "ER," but jokingly added, "I have suggested that George Clooney be in a coma for the entire episode."

Retorted Clooney: "Sometimes we give these beginning directors a shot on our show. If he does well, he just might have a big television career."

Obviously, Schumacher enjoyed working with Clooney, especially when compared with the previous Batman, **Val Kilmer**, with whom the director reportedly had friction. Schumacher said that Clooney brought his own sensibility to playing the Dark Knight.

"Bringing George Clooney on changed it to the extent that we now had a humane, accessible character in the role," Schumacher said from the set of the Batcave in Long Beach, just days before principal photography wrapped. "Batman in this film is less dark, brooding and damaged. That changed the tone."

The Caped Crusader was actually a little damaged by the end of filming. Clooney severely sprained an ankle playing basketball—one of his favorite pastimes—during a break from "ER," but managed to work his remaining Bat-scenes around it, although he sported a cane in recent "ER" episodes. After his final scene in the Batcave with **Chris O'Donnell** (Robin), Clooney wore a loosely fitted and oversized tennis shoe and used the aforementioned cane to get around the food tent.

But that was just a minor bump in what producer Peter Macgregor-Scott called a smooth shoot, especially considering the film's big scale. Principal photography on "Batman & Robin"—set to premiere on June 20—finished more than a week ahead of schedule, and its budget will be slightly larger than that of "Batman Forever."

THE LATEST BAT-BITS

• The first trailer for "Batman & Robin" premiered on "Entertainment Tonight" on Feb. 19. You can actually download a look at the trailer from Warner Bros.' Website at **http://www.batman-robin.com/**

• The new Batcave and Batmobile—previous incarnations were blown up by the Riddler in "Batman Forever"—will both be larger. The Batcave, housed inside a dome in Long Beach, took five months to build and included separate "gadget rooms" for Batman and Robin and a large computer screen. In addition to the return of the Batmobile spinning up on a platform, Robin's motorcycle will come out of a pod. The new Batmobile resembles the one from "Batman Forever," but is 29 feet long with a spinning color turbine in the front. Even the treads on the car's tires feature the Bat-insignia.

• **Elle Macpherson**, who plays Julie Madison, Bruce Wayne's fiancée, appeared on "The Late Show with David Letterman" in February and briefly discussed the film. "I'm the only character that doesn't have a superhero costume," she laughed. "[I wear] very nice clothes, but they're just normal clothes. I was hoping to have a costume."

Kristofferson joins "Blade"

The latest cast news has veteran actor Kris Kristofferson as Whistler, Blade's mentor in the film. The character was created by screenwriter David Goyer for the movie, but Whistler has also been used in the "Spider-Man" animated series.

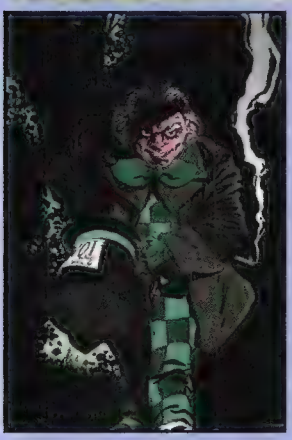
Kevin Patrick Walls, who recently starred in "Scream," is playing Krieger, an immoral police officer who is killed by Frost. The cast of "Blade" also includes N'Bushe Wright, Donal Logue, Arly Jover, Traci Lords and Sanaa Lathan. Marvel's Stan Lee will make a brief appearance as a police officer.

"Blade" is being directed by Steve Norrington.

SHORT TAKES

Jeremy Miller and Dan Cohn, both 24 years old, are writing the live-action **"Gen[13]"** film for Disney. They recently wrote the upcoming **Nicolas Cage** film, "Heartbreaker Inc." The animated "Gen[13]" film is now scheduled for a September release....A live-action **Witchblade** television series, based on the highly popular Top Cow heroine, is planned for syndication for the 1998-99 season....The cast of New Line Cinema's big-budget **"Lost in Space"** movie includes William Hurt as John Robinson, Gary Oldham as Dr. Smith, Mimi Rogers as Maureen Robinson, Lacey Chabert as Penny, Jack Johnson as Will and Heather Graham as Judy. Filming began in early March....Production is expected to begin in April on **"Total Recall: The Series,"** a syndicated television series based on the 1990 television movie starring Arnold Schwarzenegger. Rights to the series were recently purchased by Alliance Communications of Toronto....Look for "Firestorm," a big-budget film written by **Jeph Loeb** (*Batman: The Long Halloween, Captain America*), this October. It's a disaster film, and has nothing to do with the DC hero....Director Mimi Leder is following "Peacemaker," the upcoming film starring George Clooney and Nicole Kidman, with **"Deep Impact,"** a science-fiction thriller from DreamWorks and Paramount Pictures. The film, which begins production April 21, follows three characters after a group of scientists discover that a comet is on a collision course with Earth....Catherine Zeta Jones, who starred in last summer's "The Phantom," is among the cast of **"The Mask of Zorro."** Jones will play Elena, the daughter of the original Zorro.

Not many music fans know that Rob Allstetter put the spice in the Spice Girls.



Will Scarecrow (above, top) and the Mad Hatter be in the fifth Batflick?

• Among the sets designed by Barbara Ling are the Gotham Museum, the Gotham Observatory, the lairs of both Poison Ivy and Mr. Freeze, Arkham Asylum, Wayne Manor and Project Gilgamesh (which is set in an old prison in the South American jungles).

Ling, who began working on "Batman & Robin" after completing "Batman Forever," also has a full complement of Bat-gadgets, including a Batsled, Batblade and the Bathammer. Arnold Schwarzenegger's Mr. Freeze will have his own vehicle, with a large turret for a freezing ray.

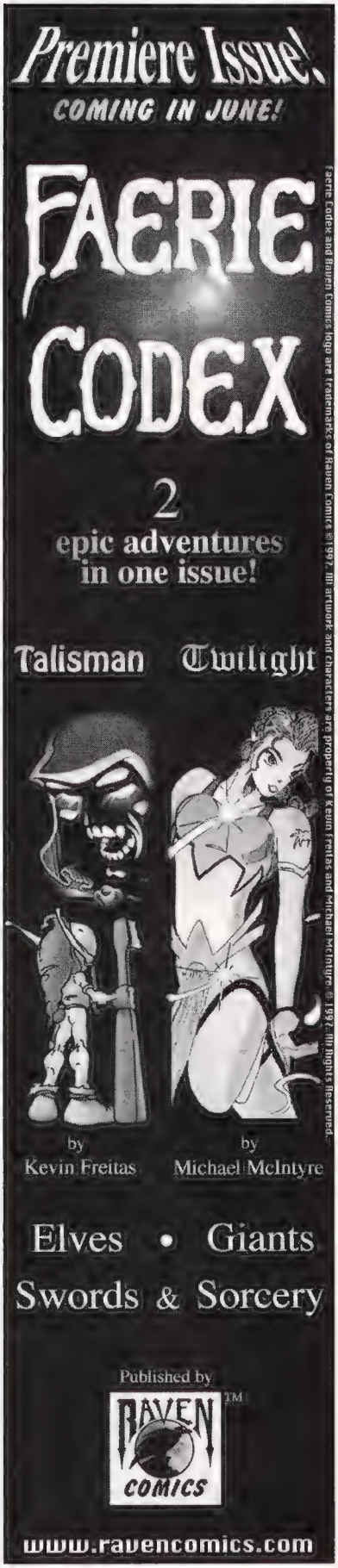
Also returning from "Batman Forever" are director of photography Stephen Goldblatt (who was nominated for an Academy Award), costumer designers Bob Ringwood and Ingrid Ferrin, film editor Dennis Virkler, visual effects supervisor John Dykstra, key make-up artist Ve Neill, special effects make-up artist Rick Baker, composer Elliot Goldenthal and sound editors Bruce Stambler and John Leveque.

• **Alicia Silverstone's** Batgirl will be Barbara Wilson, a ward of Alfred. She will be quite adept with computers.

• **Pat Hingle** returns for a fourth appearance as Commissioner Gordon.

• Schumacher was recently named the 1997 ShoWest director of the year. Each of his last three films, "The Client," "Batman Forever" and "A Time to Kill," grossed more than $100 million domestically, and "Batman Forever" was the top film for 1995.

• A fifth Batflick is already a strong probability. According to the Hollywood trades, Mark Protosevich has the inside track on writing the script for the next installment after meeting with Schumacher, who is reportedly set to direct the film. Protosevich, a former MGM executive, has written another script for Warner Bros., "I Am Legend," which is a remake of "The Omega Man." Also, *Daily Variety* recently listed the possible Bat-villains as (hold onto your seats) Egghead, Mad Hatter, King Tut and Scarecrow. The film should have a 1999 release. ■*RA*



WildStorm Productions Presents:

WildStorm's Ultimate Sports Contest

Love comics? Love sports? Well here's your chance to experience two great tastes that taste great together! WildStorm Productions will soon be issuing their *Ultimate Sports Trading Cards* set, featuring all of your favorite WildStorm characters performing various athletic feats (sky-surfing, snowboarding, bungee-jumping, etc.)! So you're probably asking, "How do I fit in to all this hubbub?" Well, by correctly answering some *WildStorm Ultimate Sports* related trivia (naturally, you can find all the answers in the *Ultimate Sports* card set), you can earn yourself a free card set, some original artwork or even a Jim Lee-signed snowboard!

How to play? Read on, friend:

Correctly respond to the *WildStorm Ultimate Sports* trivia questions contained here by a) specifically answering the question, and b) citing which card # helped you figure out yer answer! Simple enough? Cool! Winners will be randomly selected from contestants who have answered all questions correctly. Remember, kiddies…be specific!

Questions:

1. What divine agents watch over Savant's hang-gliding maneuvers?
2. How does Rainmaker stay aloft longer than her opponents in the ski-jumping event?
3. On what part of the mountain biking course did Redbird crash?
4. How did Caitlin put Gen13 in danger of disqualification?

PRIZES

Grand Prize (1): One lucky reader will receive a Deathblow snowboard signed by none other than Jim Lee himself! Plus, an appearance by MTV's "The Real World" star Sarah Becker at the store where the winner buys his or her cards and comics! Oh yeah, we'll also throw in a complete set of *WildStorm Ultimate Sports* cards.

First Prize (1): Another reader will receive a one-of-a-kind original pencil drawing by J. Scott Campbell and one complete *WildStorm Ultimate Sports Trading Cards* set.

Second Prize (1): One more reader will receive a complete set of *WildStorm Ultimate Sports* cards.

Fill this bad boy out, put it in an envelope and send it to: WildStorm's Ultimate Sports Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Deadline is May 30, 1997.

Sporting Legal Chance

No purchase necessary. Contest is open to anyone except employees of Wizard Press, WildStorm Productions, their immediate families and anybody from MTV's "The Real World." You're all irritating. Print your name, date of birth, address, city, state, zip and telephone number with area code on the official entry form or a 3-by-5-inch index card and attach to your entry. Enter as many times as you like. Mail each entry separately to: WildStorm's Ultimate Sports Contest, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118. No mechanical reproductions of completed forms are accepted, but you can photocopy the entry form before filling it out if you don't want to mess up your magazine. All entries become property of Wizard Press and none will be returned. All taxes (federal, state and local, if any) will be the responsibility of the prize winners. No cash equivalent or substitute prizes will be offered. Prizes are awarded in the names of the contest winners and are not transferable. Offer void where prohibited, regulated or restricted by law in a manner inconsistent with the purposes and rules hereof. And that guy Puck from "The Real World"? He double can't enter. All entries must be received at contest headquarters by May 30, 1997. Wizard Press is not responsible for lost, late, misdirected or mutilated entries. Odds of winning will be determined by the number of valid entries received prior to the closing date of the contest. Prize winners will be selected on a random basis from among all properly completed and correct entries by Wizard Press. Drawing will take place on June 16, 1997.

For a list of winners, available after June 16, 1997, send a self-addressed stamped envelope to: WildStorm's Ultimate Sports Winners, c/o Wizard Press, P.O. Box 118, Congers, NY 10920-0118.

Ultimate Sports Entry Form

DEADLINE IS MAY 30, 1997!

Name _____ Date of Birth _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone Number (with area code) _____

Comic Store Name & Phone Number _____

Answer # 1 _____

Answer # 2 _____

Answer # 3 _____

Answer # 4 _____

CHARACTER PROFILE:

Spider-Man

BY MATTHEW BRADY

VITAL STATS

REAL NAME: Peter Parker
AGE: mid-20s
HEIGHT: 5' 10"
WEIGHT: 165 lbs.
HAIR COLOR: Brown
EYE COLOR: Hazel
FIRST APPEARANCE: *Amazing Fantasy* #15
TITLES CURRENTLY APPEARING IN: *Amazing Spider-Man, Peter Parker: Spider-Man, Sensational Spider-Man, Spectacular Spider-Man, Spider-Man Unlimited, Untold Tales of Spider-Man*
MAJOR ENEMIES: Green Goblin, Venom, Carnage, Hobgoblin, Doctor Octopus, the Vulture, Mysterio and Scorpion

ORIGIN

Orphaned at an early age, young Peter Parker was raised by his uncle and aunt, Ben and May Parker. Parker excelled at science, and thanks to his thick glasses and his aunt making him wear ties to high school, was seen as the school nerd, and became rather introverted.

All that changed when Parker attended a demonstration on safe nuclear power. Unknown to all present, a common spider had slid in between the radioactive elements, becoming radioactive itself. The spider fell onto Parker's hand, bit him, injected its now radioactive venom, and died. Parker stumbled out onto the street, where he failed to notice an oncoming car. Sensing danger, Parker jumped clear of the car, and to his amazement, stuck to a wall like a human spider. Still startled, Parker crawled up the wall to the top of the building, where he crushed a steel pipe he grabbed for support. Realizing that he now possessed great power, Parker took the identity of "Spider-Man," a costumed entertainer who amazed crowds with his spider-like powers.

One evening, as Parker was leaving a television studio after an appearance, a man shoved by him, pursued by a security guard. Ignoring the guard's request for help, he didn't stop the man, who escaped via the elevator.

After changing clothes and returning home, Parker learned that his Uncle Ben had been killed when he surprised a burglar inside the house. Blind with grief, Parker hunted the burglar down to a nearby warehouse, where he realized that the burglar was the same man he had failed to stop at the studio. Enraged, Parker beat the man unconscious, and left him for the police to find. With his uncle's death, Parker learned the hardest lesson of his life—that with great power comes great responsibility. He vowed to never shirk this responsibility again, and the crime-fighting Spider-Man was born.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

Since his debut as Spider-Man, Parker's life has become a juggling act between student, *Daily Bugle* photographer, family supporter and costumed superhero. Originally met with suspicion and distrust, Spider-Man has since become more accepted by New Yorkers as a crime-fighting feature of the city.

Since early on, Spider-Man has attracted his share of bizarre, costumed evildoers—some with psychopathic tendencies, such as Venom or Carnage; some, like the Scorpion, just interested in thievery; and some intent on establishing crime empires, like the Kingpin and the Green Goblin (who was secretly Norman Osborn, father of Parker's college roommate Harry).

Throughout the years, Parker has had relationships with many women, but always seemed to return to his teenage sweetheart, Mary Jane Watson. Realizing the deep love that he and Mary Jane had grown to share, and the fact that MJ served as his anchor in the "normal" world, Parker proposed to her (just prior to the proposal, MJ revealed to him that she had known about his dual identity for some time). In what he saw as probably the most grown-up move he could take, Parker married MJ in a small ceremony. While the two have had their ups and downs, they share a strong love for one another that binds them together through all their trials.

The most traumatic event of Parker's career as Spider-Man came recently when a perfect clone of himself, whom he had faced years earlier, resurfaced, claiming to be the "original" Parker, and suggesting that Parker himself was the clone. For a while, Parker even started believing that the clone—who took the name of Ben Reilly and temporarily posed as the Scarlet Spider—could be the true Spidey.

As the clone crisis worsened, Parker's Aunt May became terminally ill, and during a quiet time with Parker, revealed that she had known for some time that he was Spider-Man, and was intensely proud of him for it. Parker and May had a few more days together before she passed away.

The long-running clone saga came to a head when an experiment apparently confirmed that Reilly was the original Parker. For a time, Parker gave up being Spider-Man in favor of Reilly to spend more time with his pregnant wife. Finally, the mastermind behind the clone mystery, the presumed-dead Norman Osborn (the original Green Goblin), made himself known. In a climactic battle between Parker and Osborn, Parker was revealed as the real McCoy, Reilly was killed and the Goblin apparently fell to his death. Though the good guys won, Osborn got the ultimate revenge by stealing MJ's baby and leading the Spider-couple to believe their child had died at birth.

With the clone mystery resolved, Parker has re-dedicated his efforts as Spider-Man, and has a new, more upbeat outlook on life. Together, Parker and Mary Jane are now taking their lives one day at a time, and enjoying life to its fullest.

UPCOMING HIGHLIGHTS

"We've got something for everyone in the different Spider-Man books this year," Spidey group editor Ralph Macchio says. Each of the four different Spider-Man monthly books has its own unique flavor, with *Peter Parker* focusing on organized crime, *Amazing* offering the traditional adventures of your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man, *Spectacular* delving into the more bizarre side of things and *Sensational* featuring somewhat lighter stories with an emphasis on Parker having fun as Spidey.

While exact details of Spidey's adventures were being hammered out at press time, Macchio swears that he'll stay true to his word and not have any cross-title crossovers. "If a story starts in *Amazing*, it will end in *Amazing*," the editor says. "We're making all the books as reader-friendly as we can, and so far, that really seems to be working with the fans."

And, following along in Macchio's villain-rehabilitation plan, expect to see the return of the original Vulture, the original Doctor Octopus, the Kingpin and maybe even Stilt-Man!

RECOMMENDED HIGHLIGHTS

Spidey's not one of Marvel's best characters for nothing. And we'll prove it. Check out these primo Web-Head picks!

- ***Amazing Spider-Man* #229-#230**—See Spidey get beaten into a pulp by the X-Men villain Juggernaut! But is Spidey's trump card enough to halt the unstoppable? (Plus, someone discovers Peter Parker is Spidey!)

- ***Amazing Spider-Man* #231-#232**—Cobra wants a snitch named Nose Norton dead, Mr. Hyde wants Cobra dead—and only Spidey stands in the way! Spidey at his best—action, laugh-out-loud one-liners and great art.

- ***Amazing Spider-Man* #248**—Not only did this conclude a great Spidey-vs.-Thunderball two-parter, but it had the classic back-up tale "The Kid Who Collected Spider-Man," where Spidey confronts his ultimate fan and makes the hardest decision of his life.

- ***Amazing Spider-Man* #316-#317**—With Venom threatening the lives of Aunt May and Mary Jane, Spidey must face down his most dangerous enemy *alone*. (Plus, three words: Todd McFarlane art.)

- ***Untold Tales of Spider-Man* #6**—Will the battling egos of Spidey and the Human Torch get in the way of saving New York City?

SIMILAR TASTES

A lot of heroes have tried to capture the style of Spider-Man, but most of 'em come up a bit short of the genuine article. However, books like *Green Lantern*, *Daredevil* and *Robin* capture a lot of the everyman quality, as well as great mix of action and supporting cast spotlights. Check 'em out—you won't be disappointed. W

A frequent contributor to Wizard, *Matthew Brady was also bitten by a radioactive insect, and by night fights crime as The Mighty Pillbug!*

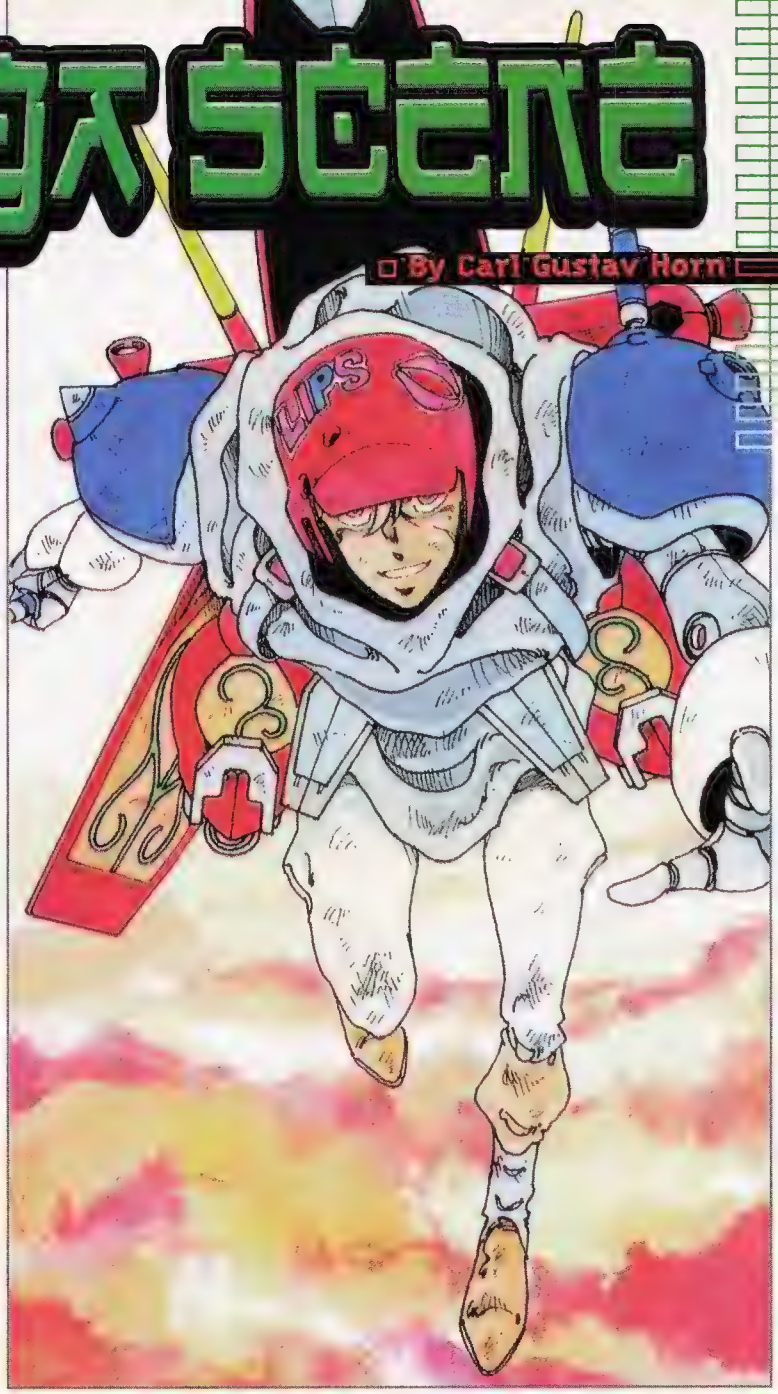
MANGA SCENE

A GUIDE TO JAPANESE COMICS AND ANIMATION

By Carl Gustav Horn

SHADES OF GREY

The price of freedom fuels the sci-fi series 'Grey'



After the death of his girlfriend, Grey Death (above) fights for "citizenship"

All he wants is the truth.

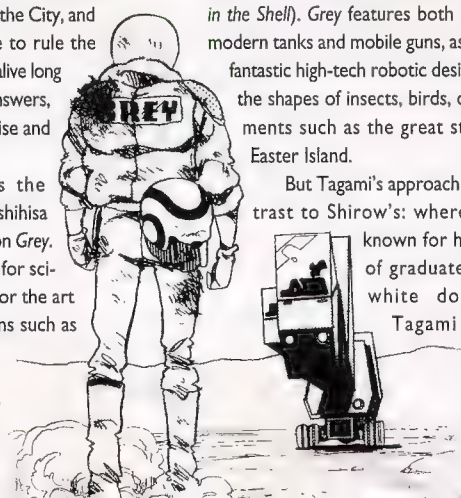
Such is the premise behind Yoshihisa Tagami's futuristic, hard-hitting manga story *Grey*. Published by Viz Comics in 1988, the nine-issue *Grey* is the story of Grey Death, a lanky, sardonic young soldier who walks around wearing the bullet-punched cycle helmet of his girlfriend Lips, who died in battle. Grey, on the surface, appears to be the consummate self-interested survivor—equally quick with the gun or with a cynical joke. But all he is interested in is one thing: the truth. And getting to the truth is a long road where "citizenship" is the ultimate destination.

Grey's future setting is a worldwide wasteland dotted here and there with numbered "Towns." Grey, like everyone in the new society, was born as one of the "People," status-less outcasts clawing to survive in the Town slums. The only way out of poverty is to enlist as a "Trooper" and literally fight your way up the social ladder to better housing and food.

Becoming a "Trooper" meant entering a gigantic, real-life war game controlled by a computer, "Big Mama," with terminals in every Town. The rules are simple: after being issued weapons, you go off to fight Troopers from some other Town. Take out enemy vehicles and Troopers and gain rank on a point system, starting at "Class F" and working your way up to "Class A." If you're one of the three percent who ever make it alive to Class A, you win "Citizenship" and can enter the "City," home of Big Mama.

But what really lies in the City, and how did Big Mama come to rule the world? And can Grey stay alive long enough to find out? The answers, if discovered, might surprise and even disturb you.

The man who has the answers, writer/artist Yoshihisa Tagami, really lets loose on *Grey*. His art style shows a flair for sci-fi "mecha" (a term used for the art style of mechanical designs such as robots, planes, etc.) fully as interesting as the work of the popular Masamune Shirow (*Ghost in the Shell*). *Grey* features both highly detailed modern tanks and mobile guns, as well as weird, fantastic high-tech robotic designs inspired by the shapes of insects, birds, or even monuments such as the great stone heads of Easter Island.



In *Grey*, it's survival of the fittest

But Tagami's approach is quite a contrast to Shirow's: whereas Shirow is known for his visual fields of graduated black-and-white dotted tones, Tagami uses tones sparingly and is a master

At left: It's no wonder "death" is Grey's last name!

of austere linework to create complicated effects. For example, a fiery, smoking detonation in *Grey* might be drawn not with tone or brushed ink, but entirely out of variations on fine lines. The overall impression of erupting chaos works—simplified art is used for complex effects.

Tagami can be quite detailed, notably in his architecture and "mecha," but he will then remove expected details—he'll draw intricate folds on clothing, but leave the folds unshadowed or, in medium-to-distant shots, he'll draw characters with only the suggestion of facial features. The result of such moves is a cleaner look that draws your attention to the composition of forms within the panel. Tagami pulls off such tricks, but combined, these artistic moves add up to his interesting style.

But whether doing sci-fi or horror, Tagami's scripts are hard-boiled and his linework clean and sharp—like a dry, patient razor. America may not see another Tagami title in English, but *Grey* and *Horobi* remain standouts from an entire decade of manga brought to the U.S., and both well deserve a second look.

Carl Horn once met a "Big Mama" but she was certainly no computer...and she had stretch marks that looked like UPC codes.

RAGE AGAINST THE MACHINE

When it comes to stories, Yoshihisa Tagami is no one-trick pony. In addition to *Grey*, Tagami's series *Horobi*, his only other English-translated manga, is a different genre altogether from *Grey*, but comes just as highly recommended. Released from Viz in 1990, *Horobi* is a psychic horror story set in modern-day Japan, where the powers of two ancient, rival bloodlines awaken to wreak bloody havoc.

In *Horobi*, writer/artist Tagami manages to take a

continued on next page →

Art for *Horobi*

EASTWARD BOUND

Tougher than Alcatraz, the Bastille and Fort Knox put together, the Japanese manga market has long been considered an impregnable fortress for American comic book creators. But a pair of U.S. comics creators have just recently done the seemingly impossible by having their comics sold in Japan, namely Paul Pope (*THB*) and Garret Izumi (*Critical Mass*).

Recruited by Kodansha (original publisher of such hits as *Gunsmith Cats* and *Sailor Moon*), the pair's work will appear in the monthly 1.1 million-selling *Morning* magazine. Izumi's "Madam XYZ" strip has already been published for a six-month stretch, while Pope's "Smoke Navigator" is awaiting publication.

"As American comics artists dealing with the manga industry," says Izumi, "we're like a small band that's suddenly been signed by a major label."

So how do two Americans—whose styles have no big eyes or speed lines, who don't speak a word of Japanese and aren't even big names in America—get published in Japan?

They have no clue. But they do have theories.

Says Pope, "It seems to me that Kodansha sees a need for freshness in manga, so there is the appeal of a foreigner. At the same time, they need a foreigner who knows how to make manga. I think manga really wants you to *experience* what the characters are doing, whereas in American comics, the creators will try to *show* you what's happening."

Izumi believes it's his approach. "Based on the previous work I'd shown them, Kodansha liked my style," Izumi says, who draws in a four-panel comic strip format, which is very popular in Japan."

If Kodansha's acceptance of American work falls into any recognizable category, it would be the small press. And it makes perfect sense: It's the only place in American comics where you can find an eccentric diversity of stories and art similar to the manga in Japan. It's a good reminder to American fans that manga is not a "look" (like big eyes or speed lines), but more an approach. Some "American manga" artists put on the *appearance* of being manga, and if Pope and Izumi are any indication, American fans might be looking at the wrong place for *true* "American manga" artists.

And if you like any manga or the small press at all, maybe Kodansha is onto something. (Aspiring American manga artists and writers who want to submit their work to Kodansha can either visit their booth at the annual San Diego Comic Con, or contact their U.S. office: Dyna-Search Inc., 11835 W. Olympic Blvd., Suite 825, Los Angeles, CA 90064.) *CGH*

THB helped Paul Pope break into Japan's manga market

somewhat clichéd premise and make it both sensible and terrifying; he writes for grown-ups. *Horobi* doesn't shrug things off to cosmic forces or mystical evolution—everything comes down to the raw emotions of real, recognizable adults and a humanity always at war with itself. With *Grey* and *Horobi* we can see a common theme that explains Tagami as a writer: the idea that a major motivation for mankind is a rage against the human condition, or put another way, against a God who doesn't seem to care much about the happiness of his creations.

If that sounds like a Vertigo book, *Horobi* does indeed compare—and appropriately, it is labeled a "mature-readers only" title. *Horobi* was never collected into a graphic novel by Viz, but its 15 square-bound issues (*Horobi Part One* #1-#8, $3.75 each, *Horobi Part Two* #1-#7, $4.25 each), are still available from Viz Shop-By-Mail at 1-800-394-3042.

F.Y.I.

Grey came out originally in nine square-bound issues and was then collected into two graphic novels; long out-of-print, the graphic novels will be re-issued by Viz Comics in June and July as the *Grey Perfect Collection Vol. 1* and *Vol. 2*. Each volume is black-and-white, 296 pages and sells for $17.95. Bug your local retailer about them.

The "Grey" anime movie is 80 minutes long and will also be released by Viz Video in July, selling for $24.95 dubbed, $29.95 subtitled.

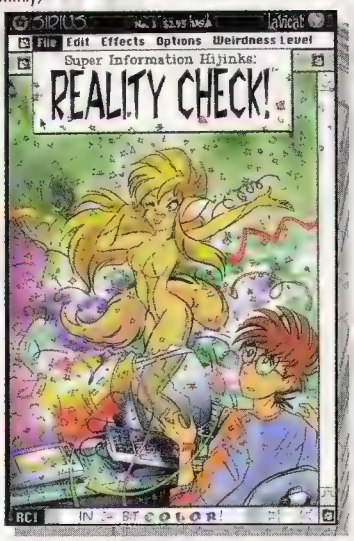
MANGA SCENE

PICKS OF THE MONTH

REALITY CHECK!

manga

(Sirius Entertainment, $2.95, color, 24 pgs., monthly)



One of the most charming examples of "American manga" to be inspired by Japanese comics, *Reality Check!* bases its inspiration in two Japanese standbys: the character designs of Haruhiko Mikimoto ("Macross," "Orguss 02," "Gunbuster"), and the phenomenon of the "cat-girl," where you have the cute synergy of femmes *and* felines in a girl with a cat-like appearance, seen in such manga as *Dominion*.

The year 2012 features the "Virtual Internet," but Collin Meeks' world is a download of a clueless family and boredom amidst the post-war Los Angeles Isles. But one day, Collin finds that his cat, Catreece, is also online. And having been "raised by humans," Catreece visualizes herself in the VR world as a humanoid girl!

Collin tells her, "Computers are not for kitties," but Catreece is having too much fun with her VR self to stay out of Collin's digital so-called social life. In a future where much of the entertainment, study and travel is conducted on the 'Net, the possibilities for trouble are endless. Sort of a light-hearted antidote to *Ghost in the Shell*!

URUSEI YATSURA

anime

(AnimEigo, subtitled, 19 vols. of 100 mins. ea., $24.95 ea., now available)

The original anime series from Rumiko Takahashi ("Ranma 1/2"), "Urusei Yatsura" is a classic not to be missed.

The story starts out as such: Ataru Moroboshi saves an ungrateful world from alien invasion by defeating their champion, a two-horned, green-haired, tiger-skinned, bikini-clad girl named Lum, in a game of tag.

Lum, believing that Ataru simultaneously proposed marriage when he won the match, fails to realize that Ataru wants every girl in the world *but* her. Moving in, she uses her powers to start delivering 50,000-volt shocks to her "fiancé," and Ataru's problems have only begun.

"Urusei Yatsura" lacks even a single "pure" character such as Kasumi in "Ranma"; *everyone*'s out to save their own skin, polish their ego, line their pockets, stuff their face, crush their enemies and grope their neighbor.

A cast of dozens of assorted weirdos—sexy and scary, human and alien—kept the extremely successful "Urusei Yatsura" hopping for 10 years in Japan; available thus far in the U.S. are 19 volumes of the TV show, six original direct-to-video volumes and six movies, the first two directed by Mamoru Oshii ("Ghost in the Shell").

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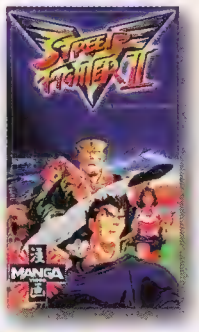

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WARRIOR NUN DEI™

CAVALCADE AUTHENTIC

by Joyce M. Steel

WildStorm Ultimate Sports Kicks Off Spring Training

WildStorm starts off the month with a series that's not just fun to collect, but aerobically beneficial too! It's *WildStorm Ultimate Sports Trading Cards*, a series boasting new art of your favorite WildStorm characters competing in extreme sports like Bungee Jumping and Cave Diving. Who's doin' the art, you ask? Just about everybody from Ryan Benjamin and Adam Hughes to Jason Pearson, Juvaun Kirby and Brian Stelfreeze, plus a dozen others! The set was bumped from last December, but it's all set for April. And to help it along, just check out the nifty-sweet *WildStorm Ultimate Sports* Contest elsewhere in this issue of *Wizard* and be prepared to answer alla the questions. Sorta like a pop quiz, only this time you can win a Deathblow snowboard signed by Jim Lee and other stuff like that. Chase cards include nine Pop-Out cards showcasing sports of the future (four per box), and four different commemorative patches (one per box) (eight cards per pack, suggested retail price $1.75).

SLIDERS

It's been a whirlwind few months for sci-fi fans with all the hype surrounding "Star Wars: The Special Edition," and it ain't over yet. Inkworks brings the hip, small-screen thriller "Sliders" to card fans in a 72-carder that recaps the show's first two seasons and offers a "best of" profile of Season Three, currently airing on FOX. Subsets include art from the Acclaim *Sliders* comic book and newly-commissioned "Alternate World Visions" by Zina Saunders and David Miller. Chasing the series are three levels of bonuses: nine FoilWorks cards (1:11), six Foil Etched Puzzle cards (1:17) and two Leticularworks cards (1:35) (eight cards per pack, suggested retail $1.79).

EVIL ERNIE

What's a "Card Market" column without a teenage psychopath? Luckily, we don't have to find out, because we have *Evil Ernie: Master of Annihilation* cards from Krome Productions this month! The insane 90-card collection features art from the macabre brushes of folks like Brom, Justiniano, Jim Balent, Joe Linsner and, of course, Brian Pulido (who's usually a writer-type guy). Special appearances by Lady Death, Chastity, Cremator, Homicide and the whole fun-lovin' gang are on tap. Chase cards include three Real-o-Rama cards, one Psycho-Apocalypse card and four Autograph cards, all randomly inserted (five cards and one NecroChrome sticker per pack, suggested retail $2.50).

KITCHEN SINK PICKS UP TEMPO

Here's a little something to make you feel all warm and fuzzy inside: Kitchen Sink has become the official distributor of Tempo, an Australian cardmaker whose first U.S. release is *Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit and Friends*! How cute is that? The 110-card series tells eight of Potter's most popular children's stories and features five levels of chase cards: Pet Cards (1:8), Pop-Ups (1:25), Character Cards (1:40), Tribute Redemption Cards (1:300) and The Potter Collection Card (25 cards worldwide) (seven cards per pack, suggested retail $1.89).

UPDATE DEPARTMENT

Fleer/SkyBox's *X-Men .99* series is currently out, and it's now been infused with even more bang for your ninety-nine cents! In addition to the five cool X-Men cards and the bonus tattoo, you'll also get three *OverPower* CCG cards and a mini-magazine which describes the game in every pack.

DISH FOR THE NEXT ISH:

Topps will take the market by storm in May when it ships its series on "The Lost World," the sequel to "Jurassic Park," which was one of the highest-grossing flicks of all time!

Bolt Entertainment, a new manufacturer born to the duo of former Chaos! and London Night Studios editor, now Avatar Press' Editor-in-Chief William Christensen and Krome Productions co-founder Kevin Alsop, debuts in May with *Warrior Nun Areala* cards.

Krome Productions previews its new Mega Chromium format...and lets Lady Death do all the talkin'. And that's all the talkin' for this month. See you in 30! W

Joyce Steel once slipped on a banana peel, broke her heel and lost her Olympic gymnastics deal. She also likes oatmeal.

"Wheee! These slopes are great to slide down!"
WildStorm Ultimate Sports Trading Cards

"It's true! If you bash a hundred Certs into your head in the dark, your scalp glows!"
Evil Ernie: Master of Annihilation

"Is it true we're only good for eatin' and reproducin', momma?"
Beatrix Potter's Peter Rabbit & Friends

***Wizard*, by staying in touch with hundreds of retailers throughout the country, keeps a close eye on the country's hottest back issues. Here are March's hottest back issues.**

TOP 10 COMICS

1. WITCHBLADE #1

WRITERS: David Wohl, Brian Haberlin and Christina Z. ARTISTS: Michael Turner and D-Tron

Sufferin' succotash! *Witchblade* #1 is number one AGAIN?! That's, like, four freakin' months in a row! Sheesh, we could have gestated half a baby in that time. Maybe Top Cow isn't the kind and benevolent comic publisher it appears to be. Perhaps Top Cow's really the personification of The Man, and it's trying to subjugate the rest of comic-bookhood under its Witchbladed heel. Or maybe it's just that Wohl, Haberlin, Z., Turner and D-Tron put out one heck of a comic about a scantily clad porn-star-quality cop with a morphin' gauntlet thingie attached to her hand. (Hmmmm...by the way, weren't Z. and D-Tron a couple of "Doctor Who" bad guys?)

2. DARKCHYLDE #1

WRITER: Randy Queen ARTISTS: Randy Queen, Jason Gorder and Marlo Alquiza

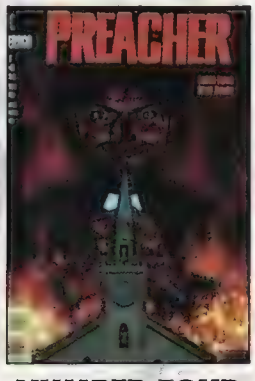
Hey, why is it these sorceress superwomen are always hot-looking chicks? The Scarlet Witch, Lilith and Lady Death are all large-racked babes, and now there's Darkchylde added to the mix. Y'know, traditionally, these witch types were supposed to be old hags with warts on their noses. So what happened? Well, we don't know why it's become socially acceptable to dabble in the black arts, but we do know there's many a fanboy out there willing to spend his money on comics featuring these magically babelicious witches over comics that feature, say, ugly old hags with warts on their noses. Hey, maybe that's why Popeye's archvillain, the Sea Hag, never had her own title.

3. WITCHBLADE #10 (DARKNESS #0 VARIANT COVER)

WRITERS: David Wohl and Christina Z.
ARTISTS: Marc Silvestri, Michael Turner, D-Tron and Batt

Sufferin' succotash! That's right! *Witchblade* is in the Top 10 again this month! This time, it's not merely Ms. Sara Pezzini who's bringin' da funk and bringin' da noise on this ish, but mob enforcer Jackie Estacado, star of *The Darkness*, another happenin' Top Cow comic. Y'see, one of every four issues shipped on *Witchblade* #10 sported this nifty-swell *Darkness* #0 variant cover. Add the "1" of the perpetually hot Witchblade and the "2" of a tough variant book, and you wind up in our #3 slot.

NUMBER THREE



NUMBER FOUR

4. PREACHER #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTIST: Steve Dillon

As loving and caring human beings, we hate to say it, but *Preacher*, with all of its sick, perverted, demented humor, is one of the best comics out there. What does this say about you, the fanboy consumer? Well, for starters, you're probably just as wonderfully warped as writer Garth Ennis, who just happens to have two other sick, perverted, demented titles in this Top 10. Secondly, and more importantly, you need to get outside and associate with three-dimensional people more often.

NUMBER FIVE

5. WITCHBLADE #2

WRITERS: David Wohl, Brian Haberlin and Christina Z.
ARTISTS: Michael Turner and D-Tron

Sufferin' succotash! *Witchblade* is in the Top 10 a third time! And by the way, did you know succotash is a stewed delicacy of corn, lima beans and tomatoes originated by the Narragansett Indians? What's the point of this trivia? Well, we have it on good authority that Sara Pezzini just had a taste of this culinary delight before her portrait for the cover of *Witchblade* #2 was drawn, thus, the look of heavenly bliss on that angelic face of hers.

6. THE DARKNESS #1

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTISTS: Marc Silvestri and Batt

Have you noticed that six of the Top 10 comics this month have a Top Cow or Garth Ennis connection? Maybe there *is* some kind of conspiracy. We already know that most of these titles, *The Darkness* included, feature characters with underworld connections. So it may be that Garth Ennis and/or Marc Silvestri are attempting to take over the world and control us through the use of one-in-four variant covers like this very dark *Darkness*. Or it just may be that we've had too many cups of coffee today.

NUMBER SIX

NUMBER SEVEN

7. JLA #1

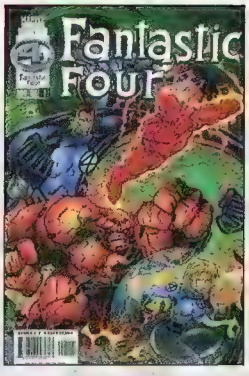
WRITER: Grant Morrison
ARTISTS: Howard Porter and John Dell

By now, you probably know that the JLA's first new villains, Protex and the Hyperclan, are Martians. Right? Waitaminnit...you didn't? Oops, sorry about letting that cat out of the bag. Anyhoo, one thing that's not a surprise is that this title has proven to be one of DC's finest—not because it's a new concept, but because it goes back to the basics of team comics. However, writer Grant Morrison does have some changes in store. For example, Plastic Man will be joining the JLA soon. Uh, you didn't know that either? Oops, that's two surprises we've blown. Sorry.

8. FANTASTIC FOUR #1

WRITERS: Jim Lee and Brandon Choi
ARTISTS: Jim Lee and Scott Williams

We know that if you absorbed as much radiation as the Fantastic Four did in gaining their powers, your internal organs would resemble something close to runny snot. We also know that if you give Jim Lee more money than God and ask him to revitalize a sales-sagging comic like the *FF*, you'll get instant success. Despite the criticisms, Marvel's "Heroes Reborn" titles have done remarkably well sales-wise. And that beats the heck out of runny snot any day of the week. And twice on Sunday.



NUMBER EIGHT

9. HITMAN #1

NUMBER NINE

WRITER: Garth Ennis
ARTIST: John McCrea

Sweet Christmas! What could be more dangerous than trying to wax the Joker? Probably nothing, with the possible exception of hurling half-digested curry onto the Batman's boots. Yes, kiddies, these are just some of the things that meta-assassin Tommy Monaghan does in the first issue of *Hitman*. Hey, he's a clichéd assassin with a clichéd attitude, but he's thrown into totally non-clichéd stories. And complementing said non-clichéd stories is the artwork of John McCrea, a subtle blend of humor and over-the-top violence that has geeks across America flocking to this title.

10. DARKCHYLDE #2

WRITER: Randy Queen
ARTISTS: Randy Queen, Jason Gorder and Marlo Alquiza

If we were Ariel Chylde, we'd be pretty miffed at the world. For starters, we'd have a father who abuses us. That's never cool. Add in the fact that we're starting over from scratch in a new town with a new school, and we're talking serious teen angst. Heck, it's enough to make a girl want to get involved with a nightmarish realm and virtually become a freakish portal to bring hellish demons to Earth. While that may have some perks, it probably wouldn't land us a prime prom date. Oh, well. Can't have it all, we guess.

NUMBER TEN

THE NEXT TEN

THE NEXT 10 HOT BOOKS AND THE COMPANIES THAT MAKE THEM

11. LEAVE IT TO CHANCE #1 HOMAGE
12. PREACHER #2 DC
13. KINGDOM COME #1 DC
14. CURSE OF THE SPAWN #1 IMAGE
15. IRON MAN #1 MARVEL
16. SUPERGIRL #1 DC
17. S. IN PARADISE #1 HOMAGE
18. FANTASTIC FOUR #2 MARVEL
19. X-MEN #62 MARVEL
20. DAWN #1 SIRIUS

WIZARD TOP 100

The highest-ordered comic books for the month of FEBRUARY.

Compiled by the *Wizard* Price Guide staff, and working off the data supplied by comic book retailers across the country, the following is a listing of the highest-ordered comics for February. Check out the column on the right for an explanation of this month's standout books (listed in **boldface type**).

1. **Uncanny X-Men #343 (Marvel)**
2. X-Men #63 (Marvel)
3. **WildC.A.T.s/X-Men #1 (Image)**
4. **Fantastic Four #6 (Marvel)**
5. Spawn #59 (Image)
6. Wolverine #112 (Marvel)
7. **Iron Man #6 (Marvel)**
8. **Avengers #6 (Marvel)**
9. **Captain America #6 (Marvel)**
10. **Generation X #26 (Marvel)**
11. Curse of the Spawn #6 (Image)
12. X-Man #26 (Marvel)
13. **The Darkness #3 (Image)**
14. **Gen^{13} #17 (Image)**
15. X-Force #65 (Marvel)
16. X-Factor #133 (Marvel)
17. Cable #42 (Marvel)
18. Witchblade #12 (Image)
19. JLA #4 (DC)
20. Excalibur #108 (Marvel)
21. Amazing Spider-Man #422 (Marvel)
22. Peter Parker, Spider-Man #79 (Marvel)
23. Incredible Hulk #452 (Marvel)
24. Gen^{13} Bootleg #4 (Image)
25. Juggernaut #1 (Marvel)
26. Spectacular Spider-Man #245 (Marvel)
27. Deadpool #4 (Marvel)
28. Sensational Spider-Man #15 (Marvel)
29. **Thunderbolts #1 (Marvel)**
30. Batman #541 (DC)
31. The X-Files #27 (Topps)
32. Darkchylde #4 (Image)
33. WildC.A.T.s #35 (Image)
34. Detective Comics #708 (DC)
35. **Superman #122 (DC)**
36. Supergirl #8 (DC)
37. **Action Comics #732 (DC)**
38. **Adventures of Superman #545 (DC)**
39. The Tenth #1 (Image)
40. **Superman: The Man of Steel #66 (DC)**
41. Batman: The Long Halloween #5 (DC)
42. Spider-Man: Dead Man's Hand (Marvel)
43. **Batman/Wildcat #1 (DC)**
44. Lady Death: The Crucible #3 (Chaos!)
45. Elektra #6 (Marvel)
46. Batman: Legends of the Dark Knight #93 (DC)
47. **Preacher #24 (DC)**
48. DV8 #5 (Image)
49. **Unknown Soldier #1 (DC)**
50. Green Lantern #85 (DC)
51. Star Wars: Tales of the Jedi—G.A.S. #5 (D.H.)
52. Batman: Shadow of the Bat #61 (DC)
53. Nightwing #7 (DC)
54. **Astro City (Vol. 2) #7 (Image)**
55. Cyberforce #31 (Image)
56. The X-Files Season One #8 (Topps)
57. Robin #40 (DC)
58. S. Wars: A New Hope—Spec. Edition #2 (D.H.)
59. Catwoman #44 (DC)
60. The Flash #123 (DC)
61. **Shi #12 (Crusade)**
62. Batman Chronicles #8 (DC)
63. **Wonder Woman #120 (DC)**
64. S. Wars: X-Wing R.S.—W. Princess #4 (D.H.)
65. Prophet/Cable #2 (Maximum)
66. Weapon Zero #11 (Image)
67. Untold Tales of Spider-Man #20 (Marvel)
68. Silver Surfer #127 (Marvel)
69. Venom: On Trial #2 (Marvel)
70. Daredevil #363 (Marvel)
71. Code of Honor #3 (Marvel)
72. X-Men: Lost Tales #1 (Marvel)
73. The Dreaming #11 (DC)
74. Hellshock #2 (Image)
75. Azrael #28 (DC)
76. What If? #96 (Marvel)
77. Journey into Mystery #508 (Marvel)
78. X-Men: Lost Tales #2 (Marvel)
79. Manga Shi 2000 #1 (Crusade)
80. Teen Titans #7 (DC)
81. WetWorks #26 (Image)
82. **Starman #29 (DC)**
83. Mars Attacks The Image Universe #3 (Image)
84. Superboy #38 (DC)
85. Birds of Prey: Revolution (DC)
86. Impulse #24 (DC)
87. Wolverine Encyclopedia #3 (Marvel)
88. Aquaman #31 (DC)
89. Hitman #13 (DC)
90. The X-Files: Afterflight (Topps)
91. **The Shade #1 (DC)**
92. Professor X and the X-Men #18 (Marvel)
93. Savage Dragon #36 (Image)
94. The Books of Magic #35 (DC)
95. Star Trek: Voyager #6 (Marvel)
96. Jack Kirby's Fourth World #2 (DC)
97. Avengelyne #10 (Maximum)
98. Avengelyne #11 (Maximum)
99. **Legion of Super-Heroes #91 (DC)**
100. The Books of Faerie #2 (DC)

AT THE TOP:

The long-awaited *WildC.A.T.s/X-Men* #1 hit an expected high ranking, and brought a huge amount of success to both WildStorm and WildC.A.T.s. WildStorm's other big superteam book, *Gen^{13}*, seems to be slumping—time for a new push, you creative folks! For the first time since their September debuts, all four "Heroes Reborn" titles made the Top 10—more and more fans are slowly discovering and jumping onto these books, and the "Industrial Revolution" crossover story also helped. *Generation X* continued its run as Marvel's next biggest X-team book under *Uncanny* and *X-Men*. It didn't take long for word-of-mouth about *The Darkness* to spread—it sold unbelievably well this month, soaring up 19 points from issue #2's placement.

IN THE MIDDLE:

Marvel's *Juggernaut* one-shot did pretty darn well for a solo villain book, especially with a fairly unknown creative team—looks like Juggy's "Onslaught" appearances did a lot for his popularity level. *Thunderbolts*, another villain-starring book (Oops! Ruined the shock ending...), scored fairly high; will the title get hotter when fans start to realize the team's big (and cool) secret? DC also fared well: The lead-up to Superman's big change gave all of his titles a slight sales shove—*Superman* even overtook *Supergirl* for the first time in months—and the solid-selling *Batman/Wildcat* brought back Ted Grant in a big way. Plus, DC's Garth Ennis is helping *Preacher* enter Superman/Batman territory and brought many of his fans to *Unknown Soldier* (which is returning to comics at just the right time—whern there's a need for grim-and-*good* stories). *The Tenth*, Image's dark Spawn-Maxxish combo creation, hit it big order-wise.

IN THE SECOND HALF:

Astro City jumped a few notches *again* this month (it was at #87 three months ago)—nothing'll cool this hot title down. The #61 ranking for the climactic *Shi* ish is fine for these comic-rack-overloaded days, but is much lower than the heroine's old Top 20 days. The major stories (both retrospective and revelatory) in Wonder Woman's extra-sized 10th anniversary issue pulled in extra readers. DC's intense Starman promotion paid off in spades, bringing the hero's book (and that of his main villain, Shade) into Top 100 glory for the first time. And it appears the full Legion team's reunion grabbed enough new readers for its title to finally make the chart.

ATTENTION COMIC BOOK RETAILERS:

If you're a retailer who would like to participate in our compiling of the *Wizard* Top 100 (and be a candidate for special prizes), please write to us at the address below.

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MARKET WATCH

COMIC MARKET NEWS AND SUCH · by Jon Warren and the *Wizard* staff

X-MEN VARIANT ALERT!

Talk about your rogue covers!

Uncanny X-Men #342, which featured Magneto on the regular/newsstand version, had a variant cover featuring a spacefaring Rogue, with the headline "Rogue Squadron." This variant is rare enough that most fans didn't even know about it; only one copy for every 25 of the regular cover edition was shipped.

A little more evident, but still fairly rare, is the variant to the Shang-Chi cover of *X-Men* #62. This variant features Storm and Wolverine with the cutline "Hellfire in Hong Kong."

Variant covers are also doing very well for Witchblade (What a surprise!). The Darkness variant of *Witchblade* #10 is up in the $15-$20 range, and the Black variant of *The Darkness* #1 has sold for as much as $50 in some areas! We also hear that the *Lady Death* alternate covers are making a comeback after a small slump, as are the *Gen*[13] variants. Happy hunting!

Even the X-Men have jumped on the variant bandwagon

Hot First Apps

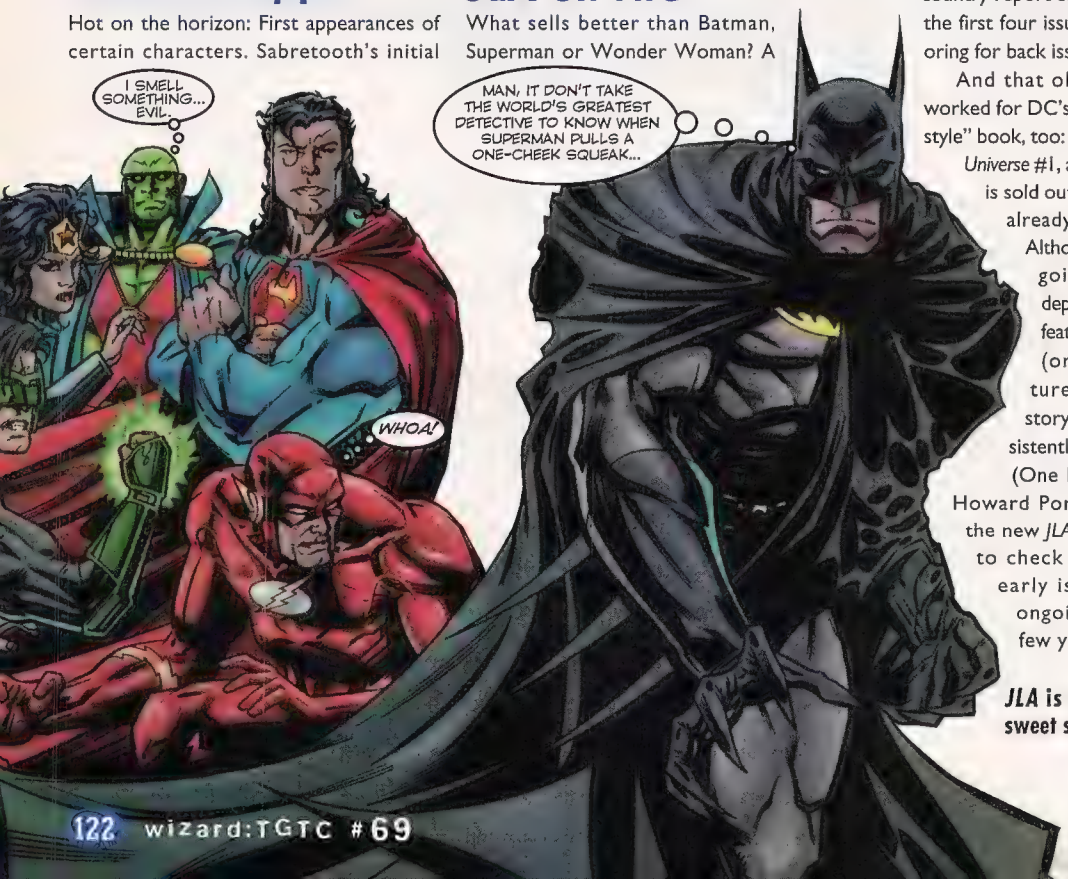
Hot on the horizon: First appearances of certain characters. Sabretooth's initial appearance in *Iron Fist* #14 recently went for $250, and the first Gambit (*Uncanny X-Men* #266) sold for $45. The first "new" *Supergirl*, issue #1 of her own ongoing title, is fetching at least $4-$5 just about everywhere. *Demon Annual* #2 (first Hitman) goes for $15-$20. Early issues of *Strangers in Paradise*, introducing major characters, sell for up to $5 over guide. (Remember, *Wizard*'s price guide is just that—a *guide* to current comic values—and your local retailer's price for a book may be higher than ours.)

JLA on Fire

What sells better than Batman, Superman or Wonder Woman? A book starring all three of 'em, plus the rest of the DC "biggies." It's *JLA*, of course, the newest incarnation of the venerable Justice League of America. Retailers all over the country report complete sell-outs of the first four issues, with fans clamoring for back issues.

And that old team-up magic worked for DC's newest "animation style" book, too: *Adventures in the DC Universe* #1, also starring the JLA, is sold out everywhere and is already a hot back issue. Although sales have been going up and down depending on who's the featured star of an issue (or even who's featured in the back-up story), they're still consistently high.

(One last tip: If you like Howard Porter's artwork on the new *JLA* series, you ought to check out his work on early issues of *The Ray* ongoing series from a few years back.)



***JLA* is experiencing the sweet smell of success**

'Reborn' Demand

The "Heroes Reborn" titles, once the object of doom-'n'-gloom predictions, have proven themselves a wildly successful gamble for Marvel. *Fantastic Four*, *Iron Man* and *Captain America* sell out in many areas, and *The Avengers* looks to be joining them very soon, thanks to the presence of new penciler Ian Churchill. Back issues are booming, too. We're hearing $4-$8 for early issues and $25-$40 for the variant covers, and demand is rising, with many retailers unable to get back issues at any price!

Current Collector Quests

Books fans are looking for these days: Tomoe fans are searching out *Shi* #6, which was also *Tomoe* #1. Early issues of the "Devil's Reign" crossover between Top Cow and Marvel are increasing in demand. *The X-Files* #4-#10 are getting harder to find, as is *The Final Night* #4 (Hal Jordan's sacrifice issue). *Gen*[13] #4-#12 are hot items, rising up to $6 each. The first three issues of *Poison Elves* command higher-than-guide prices and are snapped up immediately. And *Astro City* (first series) back issues are really hard to find, particularly #5 and #6—looks like many *Astro City* fans are trying to complete their runs. W

The ever-changing Jon Warren is his own variant edition.

"Devil's Reign"—staring Witchblade and Elektra—has tempted readers

Wizard's Top 10 Writers

1. Garth Ennis — *Preacher, Hitman*
2. Mark Waid — *Flash, X-O Manowar*
3. Scott Lobdell — *Generation X, Uncanny X-Men* (J. Schuyler)
4. Peter David — *Hulk, Aquaman* (Al Ortega)
5. Grant Morrison — *JLA* (Bobo Martin)
6. Ron Marz — *Green Lantern, Superboy* (J. Schuyler)
7. Frank Miller — *Sin City* (Al Ortega)
8. Kurt Busiek — *Astro City, Untold Tales of Spidey* (Al Ortega)
9. David Wohl — *Witchblade*
10. Chuck Dixon — *Robin, Green Arrow* (Al Ortega)

Wizard's Top 10 Artists*

1. Jim Lee — *Fantastic Four* (Al Ortega)
2. Joe Madureira — *Uncanny X-Men* (Gabe Polacio)
3. J. Scott Campbell — *Gen*[13]
4. Alex Ross — *Kingdom Come* (Al Ortega)
5. Carlos Pacheco — *X-Men*
6. Michael Turner — *Witchblade*
7. Marc Silvestri — *The Darkness* (Al Ortega)
8. Joe Quesada — *Ash* (Al Ortega)
9. Chris Bachalo — *Generation X*
10. Andy Kubert — *Ka-Zar* (J. Schuyler)

* Pencilers and painters

Wizard's Top Ten Professionals lists are derived from a nationwide retailer survey.

Wizard's Up & Coming Creator

POP MHAN

Since *Ghost Rider* is a freaky series, this artist's cartoony, slightly off-kilter style works well with the character. Fans of Mike Wieringo and Steve Skroce's work will like the exaggerated features of Mhan's characters (especially his slightly campy, but still demonic-looking, take on the hero), and GR fans themselves will enjoy the fact that his bigger, more animated panels and figures have lightened up the book—making even dark and violent scenes fun to read. He uses his fine action-depicting ability to add to the suspense of each story, or to create humorous slapstick scenes, and can present a shocking horror scene just as well as an emotional one.

Ghost Rider editor Tom Breevort says, "His work's got a look of animated energy; a lot of kineticism and life. It's attractive and different, but not overdone. And he's getting better all the time." ■ *Marc Wilkofsky*

WIZARD® #70

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BULL PEN

My God...It's Full of Hair

In an attempt to fill their otherwise empty lives, Wizard Press staffers Andrew Kardon, Bob Marshall, Dan DiGiacomo, Marc Wilkofsky, Matthew Senreich, Mike Fasolo, Mike Searle and wee Phil Colligan showed their manhood (!) by seeing who could grow the most impressive facial hair in a 30-day window. So, after looking like crap for a month, who walked away with the non-trophy and 16 bucks cash? Assistant Editor and Twisted Sister groupie Andrew Kardon Edged out the competition (Get it? "Edge"...like the razor? Wheeee, we're so witty!). "Any excuse not to shave is a good one," commented the itchy-chinned Kardon. "And $16 buys a lot of cheese."

We've since shaved all participants.

Hair-champ Kardon (top) and DiGiacomo, shown here with two weeks' growth. (He lost.)→

One of the Damned

Jennifer Cavallo

Administrative Assistant, Wizard: The Guide to Comics

What is it you do at Wizard?

I set up staff meetings, transcribe articles, work on the writers' contracts, handle a lot of paperwork, and most importantly, make sure contributors to the magazine get paid. Actually, *most* importantly, I order Unity Day lunch (paid for by the company) for the Wizard Press staff twice a month.

What surprised you most about the Wizard offices?

It's all guys. There's only two girls on the whole first floor—there's guys everywhere. And it *is* scary.

Illustration by Jim Cubby

What was your most embarrassing moment at Wizard?

The first time I was on the Wizard softball team, I let a ball wail me in the chest, knocking the wind out of me. I did everything in my power not to cry.

What have you learned about the comic industry from working at Wizard?

It's all guys. Seriously, it's a male-dominated field. Creators like Colleen Doran, Amanda Conner and Louise Simonson are so few and far between. Also, I didn't realize how popular comics are today until I started working here.

What hobbies or outside interests do you have?

I'm an avid Smurf collector. Also, shopping with my mom, watching my nephew Georgie and fishing.

Favorite movies of all time?

"Gone with the Wind" and "The Wizard of Oz."

Who would play you in a movie?

Danica McKellar (Winnie Cooper on "The Wonder Years").

People would be surprised to know that you...

once had a belly ring.

Favorite musical performers?

Erasure, Billy Joel and my dad, who composes his own songs.

Favorite comic book?

Gen13. For Halloween, I was Freefall, and I started reading the book to get to know the character. That's what got me hooked.

What superpower would you want, and why?

Invisibility—so I can secretly hear and see all the things I wonder about.

WIZARD TOP TEN

Top 10 scenes that didn't make it into the 'Star Wars Special Edition'

10. C-3PO discovering that the Jawa he just dropped into the fire wasn't quite dead.
9. Uncle Owen backhanding Luke to get him to stop whining about power converters.
8. The startled Ronto taking a giant crap on the Mos Eisley street.
7. Han Solo backhanding Luke to get him to stop whining about the 10,000 credits.
6. Porkins with his shirt off eating fried cheese.
5. Obi-Wan backhanding Luke to get him to stop whining about going to Alderaan.
4. The C-3PO/R2-D2 car chase from the Palace Hotel and Ballroom to the Honorable Mayor Richard J. Daley Plaza.
3. Darth Vader backhanding Luke to get him to stop whining about being his son.
2. Boba Fett actually doing something.
1. R2-D2 backhanding Luke to get him to stop whining about his secret mission for the Alliance.

CONTEST WINNERS

BORIS/JULIE, *Wizard* #64: Michelle Rivera, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

DARK KNIGHT, #64: Nathan MacDicken, McLean, Va. (Check out Nathan's "Dark Knight-ized" Wonder Woman!)

DARKNESS, #64: Peter Byrne, Little Egg Harbor, N.J.

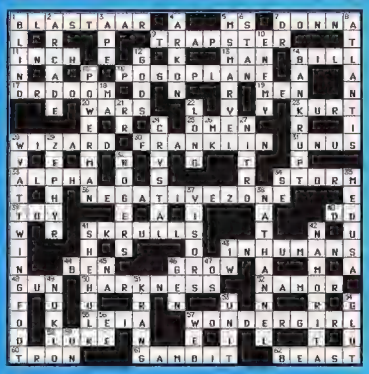
C.B.I.Q. answers...

from page 180

1. C	5. A	9. A	13. B	17. C
2. A	6. B	10. C	14. D	18. D
3. A	7. C	11. C	15. C	19. A
4. D	8. A	12. B	16. B	20. C

CROSSWORD answers...

from page 181



BULL PEN

C.B.I.Q.

Games, puzzles and stuff that'll tickle your tummy with the taste of nuts and honey

comic book intelligence quotient

Former Mort of the Month Kite Man welcomes you to the Miscellaneous *Wizard* Fun Section

Now is the time to rate your mental abilities, using what we affectionately call the "CBIQ." This time, we'll compare your mental strength against the events that transpired in comics about which we wish somebody had stood up and yelled "April Fools!" afterwards. The higher your score, the bigger the joke.

Score	Rank
0-4	"How about we drive Iron Man crazy, kill him and replace him with his younger self with less facial hair?"
5-14	"Here's an idea…whatta ya say we change Superman's costume, and give him new powers and blue hair?"
15-19	"Okay…here's one: We rip all the adamantium outta Wolverine, change his costume and cover him with hair!"
20	"Then how about we bring back that Spider-clone who died back in the '70s, make him the new Spidey, give him a new costume and bleach his hair?"

1. Who are the parents of assassinated, mutant-hating presidential candidate Graydon Creed?
A. Bastion and Destiny
B. Bolivar Trask and Selene
C. Mystique and Sabretooth
D. Cyclops and Jean Grey

2. What malevolent magical object turned poor, sweet Shrinking Violet of the Legion of Super-Heroes into a power-mad wench bent on destroying the whole freakin' team?
A. The Emerald Eye
B. The Sword of Damocles
C. The Spear of Destiny
D. the Psionic Mental Suit (better known as P.M.S.)

3. What substance is Sara Pezzini's Witchblade made of?
A. malakhite
B. daemonite
C. strontium
D. adamantium

4. Which of the following mutant superhero-types are related?
A. Professor X and Cyclops
B. Storm and Bishop
C. Wolverine and Thunderbird
D. Cannonball and Husk

5. What unique relationship does Daredevil's pal Foggy Nelson have with their law partner Rosalind Sharpe?
A. Foggy is Sharpe's son.
B. Sharpe was Foggy's jilted lover from his college days.
C. Sharpe flunked Foggy in college when she was his law professor.
D. Rosalind used to be Foggy's brother before…Sweden.

6. Marvel's new superteam, the Thunderbolts, debuted in…
A. *The Avengers*
B. *The Incredible Hulk*
C. *X-Factor*
D. *Thunderbolts* (duh)

7. Which Dark Horse character helped rescue the young Hellboy from the Nazis?
A. Doc Danger
B. Martha Washington
C. Torch of Liberty
D. Monkeyman

8. Who was the detective recently assigned to find out everything about Catwoman?
A. McShane
B. Macintosh
C. McDonald
D. MacGyver

9. What the heck is the name of that dummy that rules the life of the Batman rogue, the Ventriloquist?
A. Scarface
B. Gabbo
C. Godfather
D. Woody

10. Whom did Mephisto control in the "Devil's Reign" story?
A. Ripclaw
B. The Darkness
C. Heatwave
D. Witchblade

11. What did Superman have engraved on the diamond of Lois' wedding ring?
A. An S shield and "To My Never-Ending Love"
B. A heart and "To the Love of My Life"
C. An S shield and "To Lois, Love, Clark"
D. "I Love You, Lana, Lori, Lois" with Lana and Lori crossed out

12. In the future of Bishop and Shard, what does XSE stand for?
A. X-Factor Surveillance Emmissaries
B. Xavier's Security Enforcers
C. X-Gene Strikeforce Elite
D. X-Cruciatingly Scalding Enema

13. What equation does Jesse Quick use as a mantra to focus on her Speed Force ability?
A. E = mc2
B. 3x2(9YZ)4A
C. AB2(4Yx3)9Z
D. NE14A69

14. What commie rat-bastard is responsible for the deaths of Richard and Mary Parker, parents of your friendly neighborhood Spider-Man?
A. Gremlin
B. Red Ghost
C. Red Guardian II
D. Red Skull II

15. Why'd *Preacher*'s hardass Sheriff Root shoot himself?
A. He was very despondent after Kurt Cobain killed himself and decided to follow his hero into the afterlife.
B. After his son tried to commit suicide, Root blamed himself and decided it was he who should die, not his son.
C. After Jesse Custer told him to "Go @*!& yourself!," Root did but didn't like the results, so he shot himself.
D. It just seemed like the thing to do.

16. What disease was Terry Fitzgerald dying of until Spawn used his power to cure him?
A. AIDS
B. cancer
C. radiation poisoning
D. Confusion. C'mon, you ever try and make sense of that comic?

17. Which of the following is not true concerning the relationship between Danny Ketch and Johnny Blaze?
A. They are brothers.
B. Both were Ghost Riders.
C. They were both circus performers.
D. Both were possessed by the demon Zarathos.

18. What did Aquaman do to the Demon Gate, the killer of his dolphin friend Porm, when he finally got a hold of him?
A. killed him
B. beat him into a coma
C. paralyzed him
D. stranded him on a deserted island in the middle of the ocean

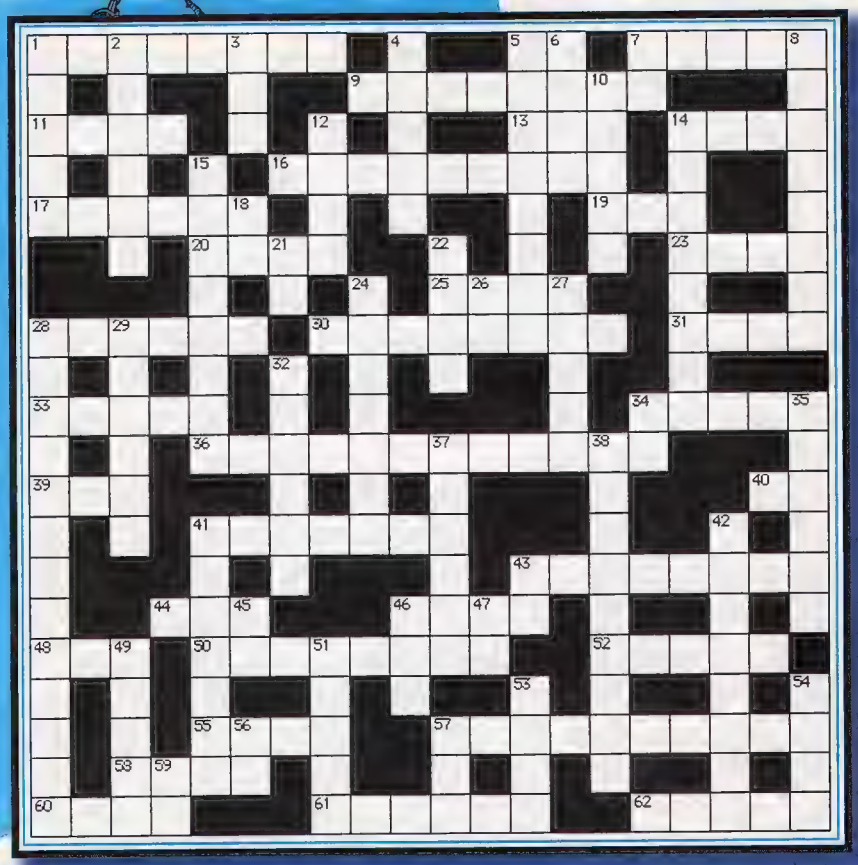
19. Besides a really keen sword, what else does Warrior Nun Areala use in her war on evil?
A. a bionic arm
B. a flight ring
C. a golden lasso
D. T-squares. Boy, those things sure sting like the dickens when you bend 'em back and zap somebody with 'em.

20. How was Dr. Strange able to enter the pocket dimension where the Avengers and Fantastic Four now reside?
A. He was tricked into traveling there by that dimension's Loki.
B. He was drawn there through the Negative Zone dimensional gate that the FF left at Four Freedoms Plaza.
C. He was drawn through a dimensional anomaly that was left with the Hulk when Bruce Banner went into the pocket dimension.
D. The real question isn't how you'd get into the "Heroes Reborn" universe, but why you'd wanna *go* to the "Heroes Reborn" universe.

WIZARD CROSSWORD

you know, across, down, that sort of stuff

TOO TOUGH?
Nuff yakkin'
The answers are on page 179.



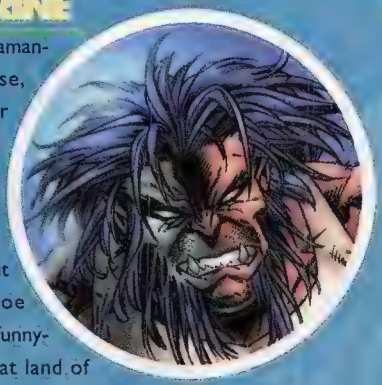
1. The Living Bomburst
5. employed the Marauders; initials
7. GL's gal
9. Paste-Pot Pete
11. Ant-Man size; half an ____
13. Buddy Baker, Animal ___
14. Beta Ray ____
16. Fantastic Four's long-range vehicle
17. armored FF foe
19. *All-American* ____ *of War*
20. Secret or Star
23. blue X-Man or Busiek
25. mysterious robed Titan
28. Frightful Four leader
30. age-changing FF child
31. ____ the Untouchable
33. Flight or Centurion
34. "Goddess!"
36. home of 1 across
39. action figure gurus; ___ Biz
40. Foggy Nelson's partner; init.
41. green morphing aliens
43. residents of Attilan
44. Thing's first name
46. the Atom can do this
48. Punisher weapon
50. 30 across' spooky nanny
52. "Imperius Rex!"
55. Obi-Wan was her only hope
57. one of 7 across' many identities
58. 55 across' brave brother
60. pre-Ninjak video game adventurer
61. "Pick a card, *mon ami.*"
62. "Age of Apocalypse" villain, Dark _____

1. Alicia Masters is this
2. owner of Murderworld
3. Flash enemy Grodd is this
4. ruler of Polemachus
5. She-Thing
6. Fantastic Four creator
7. Inza Nelson's partner, __ Fate
8. home of 52 across
10. what 17 across is to 21 down
12. Byrne revamped the New ____
14. Marvel's financial status
15. recently reunited with Iron Fist
18. what Franklin calls 43 down
21. Mr. Fantastic; init.
22. Milestone's ____ *Hot Summer*
24. elemental Inhuman
26. Prophet artist's first big hero; init.
27. explosive Captain Marvel foe
28. FF's Native American friend
29. windy Arab villain
32. Captain America's last name
34. Iron Man's corporation; init.
35. long-tressed Inhuman
37. Cyclops and Geordi's eyegear
38. Reed's dad
41. green Thing replacement
42. "cousin" of 52 across
43. blond FF member; init.
46. Fairchild's dad belonged to ___12
47. *Birds of Prey: Revolution* is this; abbrev.
49. Whizzer's son
51. Atlantean warlord
53. ill-fated Harris team; Q-____
54. the dreaded comic book ____
56. Hope's psychotic pal; init.
57. Peter Parker's favorite fluid
59. *Kingdom Come* site

TOP 10 HEROES & VILLAINS OF THE MONTH

This list doesn't track the number of copies which a specific character sells each month. It doesn't pay attention to any kind of sales meter. This list is a roster of the 10 comic book characters with the strongest fan following—nothing more, nothing less.

1) WOLVERINE



Adamantium or no adamantium, nose or no nose, fangs or no fangs, fries or onion rings, boxers or briefs, aisle or window, it makes no difference: That Woof-'n'-Ream fella appears to be 'bout the most popular Joe currently appearing in funny-books 'cross this great land of ours. 'Course, we'd be hard-pressed to tell you why. After all, if a mug like this showed up on our doorstep trying to sell Amway products, we'd slam the door and run. It's probably got a bit to do with the fact that everyone love a mystery man. Oh, yeah—There's that X-Men connection too.

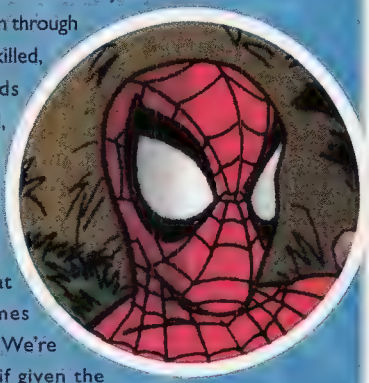
2) SPAWN

OUCH! That's one nasty knock in the kisser Spawn's taking. Come to think of it, Spawn's kisser is pretty nasty all by itself. Just how do you wind up with a head that looks like that? The only possible ways we can think of are by: a) bobbing for apples in 12-molar hydrochloric acid, or b) playing Canadian junior hockey for two seasons without benefit of helmet, face mask or mouth guard. Since Spawny-guy's creator, Todd McFarlane, is Canadian, we're betting on the hockey answer. Looks like he would up on the losing end of a few too many slobberknockers.

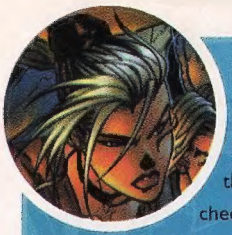
3) WITCHBLADE

Then there are those faces that are a bit more pleasant to look at. Submitted for your approval: One Sara Pezzini, bearer of the Witchblade. Heck, her publishers at Top Cow think she's so durned pretty, they're plastering her delicate features everywhere: On posters, on statues, all over the Marvel/Top Cow "Devil's Reign" crossover, maybe even action figures (Really!) and a TV show (Double really!!) for 1998. Yep. Just goes to show you that leggy supermodel looks and fetching brown eyes can get you a bit farther in life than being bitten by a radioactive bug. Don't believe us? You soon will. Just look to the right and learn all the details.

4) SPIDER-MAN



Ah, Spider-Man. We feel a bit sorry for the ol' chap. He's been through everything. Parents killed, uncle killed, friends killed, girlfriend killed, cloned, forced to drive that insane Spider-Mobile dune buggy, etc. Makes you think that with great power, there comes great pains in the ass. We're willing to bet that if given the choice, Peter Parker would've chosen to never have been bitten by the radioactive spider that gave him his powers. He'd much rather just take newspaper photos, eat take-out Chinese food and get a little sumpthin'-sumpthin' from his wife Mary Jane.



5) ROGUE

Think Rogue wears rouge? You know, that reddish makeup that chicks put on their cheeks? No, not *those* cheeks—the cheeks on their face, guttermind! Rogue's looking a little bit on the rosy side here. Perhaps it's just some well-applied makeup. Or perhaps she's thinking of the prospects of her on-again/off-again romance with Magneto that's got her blushing. But the big question: Does she really love Magneto, or Joseph as he's now known? Rogue or rouge? Does she or doesn't she? Only her colorist knows for sure.

6) DARK CLAW

He's half Batman, half Wolverine, and now he's animated. What's not to like? Kudos to DC and Marvel on several points: Bringing the Amalgam Universe back (Hip!), bringing Dark Claw back (Hip, hip!) and having the nuggets to do something different with him by drawing him in DC's animated style (Hip, hip, hooray!).

We can hardly wait for the '98 version of Dark Claw. Will it be *Untold Tales of Dark Claw? Amalgam Team-Up: Dark Claw and Night Nurse?* Wait and see.

7) FAIRCHILD

Ooooh, green eyes. Ooooh, red hair. Ooooh, half a butt hanging out of a Spandex unitard. Think we just described fanboy paradise? Throw in a day off from school and a 64-ounce Big Gulp and you're right. Well, everything except the day off and the pop are brought to you in one package: Caitlin Fairchild. Any wonder why she's so popular? Throw in the fact that she's the strong, intelligent leader of Gen[13] and she's practically over the top.

8) X-MAN

Y'know, this X-Man guy seems to be pretty popular, with his wild, messed-up hair, devilish grin and glowing red eyes. That can't be why he's popular though. If that was all it took, then the entire *Wizard* road staff during convention season would be wildly popular. And believe you us—we ain't. So it must be the fact that he's yet another mystery man (a pretty confusing mystery, at that), and yes, he's another X-Men hanger-on.

9) MAGNETO

Geez, Magneto makes 4 1/2 X-Guys so far (Yes, we're counting Dark Claw as a half) on this list. If we hit five, we'll be one over the legal limit and the Earth will blow up or something. Magneto (or "Joseph," if you prefer) is one mixed-up mutant kind of guy. He's not sure if he wants to embrace his violent past or move toward a more peaceful future. That kind of inner strife in a character can lead to some great comic book stories. Or it could lead to something like the recent *Magneto* mini-series. Bleargh.

10) BLINK

That's it! Blink makes 5 1/2 X-Persons. The next sound you hear will be reality exploding. Which is kinda appropriate in this case, seeing as how Blink's popularity defies logical explanation. First, she's a *minor* X-Character. No one cares. Then she dies. No one cares. Then she appears, alive again, in the alternate-reality "Age of Apocalypse." Now everyone loves her and wants her back! Guess it goes to show ya, ya always want what you can't have.

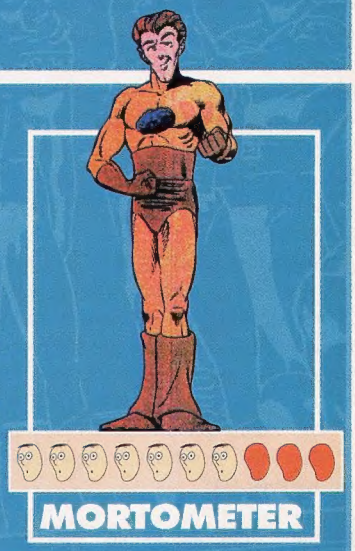
MORT OF THE MONTH

Now it's time to look at the lamest character of the month, or, as we like to call 'em, the Mort of the Month!

STONE BOY

Ladies and gentlemen, we present Stone Boy! Gaze upon Stone Boy, he whose power is the ability to transform himself into immovable, inflexible stone at will! To become a veritable living statue!

What's so friggin' heroic about that?? All this clown can do is hang out in a sculpture garden and get crapped on all over by pigeons! Is that all you need to qualify as a member of the Legion of Substitute Heroes? Great. We'd rather be Newsboy Legionnaires. It'd get us more chicks.



WIZARD profile

Here's looking at...

BRIAN AUGUSTYN

Brian Augustyn wanted to be more on the creatively satisfying side of things. That's why he gave up his long tenure as a DC editor last year and turned his full attention to writing. But what he didn't expect—as a solo writer and in tandem with good buddy Mark Waid—was to be swamped with work as diverse as DC's *Justice League of America: Year One* and *The Flash*, and Event Comics' *Ash* and *Painkiller Jane*.

"It's definitely a lot of balls to keep in the air," chuckles the ever-low-key Augustyn, a Connecticut resident. "But I've been lucky that while my schedule is a little packed, at least it's reasonably sane."

Augustyn, 42, was born and raised in Chicago, Ill. It was an upbringing that he considers "boringly normal." "I belonged to teams. I played sports. I was an altar boy who wrapped a towel around my neck, jumped off the porch and was surprised and disappointed when I didn't fly."

Augustyn, who "never thought it possible to have a comic book career," went to the Chicago Academy of Fine Art and spent the next 10 years alternating comic book fandom with art-oriented jobs in production and advertising. Augustyn made his first step back into comics in the mid-'80s, writing, editing and handling much of the publishing on an independent called *Trollords*. In 1988, he interviewed for an editing job at DC and spent the next decade editing the likes of *Green Arrow*, *Blackhawk* and childhood fave *The Flash* while bonding creatively and friendship-wise with writer Mark Waid. It was in conjunction with Waid that Augustyn wrote his first big-time story, an untold tale of Bruce Wayne's first case for *Detective Comics Annual #2*. The duo teamed again for an Elseworlds story that eventually became the acclaimed *Gotham by Gaslight*. Augustyn continued to edit while still finding time to write. He worked on a sequel to *Gaslight* called *Master of the Future*, did 12 issues of a revamped *Black Condor*, once again teamed with Waid to write DC's Archie/Impact titles *The Crusaders* and *The Crucible* (along with editing *The Fly* and *The Comet*), and *Legends of the Dark Knight Annual #4*, before going solo again in creating *Firebrand*.

courtesy of Brian Augustyn

"It's two different things," says Augustyn of his Waid collaborations and solo endeavors. "Working with Mark is great because we're so much in synch on things. Writing on my own is cool in that I do have separate interests."

Augustyn left his editing job in March of 1996 and continues to write with Waid on such projects as the creator-owned *Empire* for Homage Comics, *X-O Manowar* for Acclaim and an upcoming DC graphic novel *The Life Story of the Flash*. Besides being on the more creatively satisfying side, Augustyn now gets to toil at home. And the writer couldn't be happier.

"I'm a dad with two little girls who are growing up way too quickly," he says. "If things get too crazed, I can always go up and play with my kids for a while. It's definitely a stress reliever and it keeps me in touch with my inner kid."

By Marc Shapiro

First comic read...
An *Action Comics* issue from 1963. It had a classic cover of Clark Kent being discovered changing into Superman. How could I not buy that comic?

Favorite comics of all time...
The Carmine Infantino run of *The Flash* [he penciled #105-#162] is the only thing I own every issue of.

Favorite work of your own...
I'm proudest of the current *Flash* stuff and the Batman Elseworlds stuff.

Comics you read...
Daredevil, *Steel*, *JLA*, *Optic Nerve*, *Eightball* and everything Mark Waid writes.

The one person you'd like to meet...
[Artist] Alex Toth

Superpower you would most want...
I would take superspeed in a blink. When I was 14, I wanted invisibility.

Favorite munchie at 2 a.m....
I don't munch, ever. I'm not allowed to.

Favorite toy as a kid and as an adult...
Die-cast metal cars, then and now.

Things you collect...
Lurid cover crime paperbacks

Person you would most like to work with...
Director Ron Howard

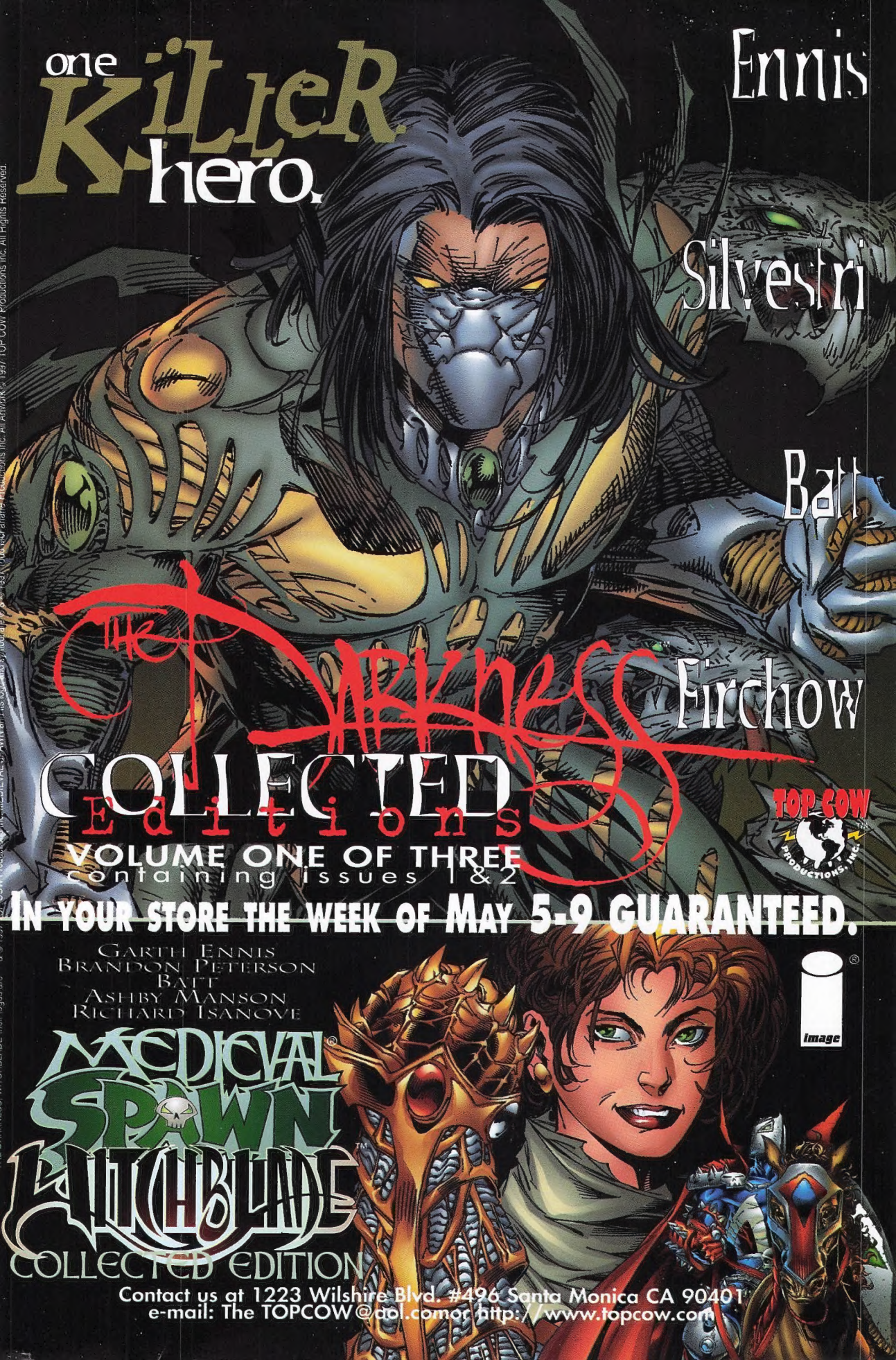
Favorite TV shows...
"The X-Files" and "Homicide: Life on the Street"

Favorite cartoon...
"Rugrats"

Last good movie you saw...
"The Hunchback of Notre Dame"

Last good book you read...
Byzantium, by Stephen Lawhead

If you had the power of The Beyonder...
I'd give *Captain America* back to Mark Waid and Ron Garney. W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